

**Theodore Roosevelt National Park,
North Dakota
Historic Resource Study**



Foundation of Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi



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Abstract

Located on 70,446 acres of Badlands territory in western North Dakota, Theodore Roosevelt National Park is divided into three geographically separate areas known as the South Unit, the Elkhorn Ranch Unit, and the North Unit. Founded to honor the president who spent time there in the 1880s and carried the experience forward through the rest of his remarkable career, the park in many ways also records the heritage of the entire North American continent. Among the stories that echo off its eroded cliffs are the first peopling of the continent; the dynamic American Indian cultures that evolved amid formidable environmental challenges; the prolonged period of contact between indigenous and Euro-American peoples and the consequent reshaping of both; the integration of even the remotest places into an international capitalist economy; the transformative energies that industrial development released along with its devastating human and environmental costs; the agrarian dreams that immigrants and other settlers chased across the Plains; and finally the twentieth-century rise of both conservation and consumerism as ways of valuing places and defining identities.

This historic resource study provides baseline documentation for this deep history. Human beings have used these lands for sustenance, trade, recreation, and spiritual regeneration for more than ten thousand years. Over that span, the many and varied peoples who have come to the area found creative ways to get by, and even live well, despite the difficult environment. They have used its many resources ingeniously, moved from place to place to maximize access to what they valued, bartered their excess for goods they could not find or make themselves, and preserved rich cultural traditions rooting their identities in the place. This study tells their stories, from the earliest hunter-gatherers to modern RVers and wilderness enthusiasts, emphasizing each people's relationship with the land and their visions for what their worlds might be.

Never, however, did these stories unfold in isolation. Trade networks linked western North Dakota to the rest of the continent from the very beginning, and ever since then, migration, disease, markets, railroads, highways, and the free-flow of ideas have brought constant changes to the region, its people, and their aspirations. Thus, a second goal of this historic resource study is to place western North Dakota's stories in a rich context of other places, near and far, to which human activity has connected the Badlands. The report demonstrates the many ways in which the lands that became Theodore Roosevelt National Park are unique and must be preserved in their own right as well as the ways that they help illustrate much larger themes that have shaped North American history. In telling the stories of the place and linking them to broader contexts, this historic resource study aims to enrich park personnel's understanding of the historical significance of the resources they manage, preserve, and interpret for the public.

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Prepared under Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Cooperative Agreement
#H1200-09-0005, PR #20026286

Theodore Roosevelt National Park
Midwest Region, National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
January 10, 2017

Recommended: _____
Associate Regional Director of Cultural Resources, Midwest Region _____
Date _____

Concurred: _____
Superintendent, Theodore Roosevelt National Park _____
Date _____

Approved: _____
Regional Director, Midwest Region _____
Date _____

Acknowledgements

The principal investigators and researchers would like to acknowledge the tremendous support they have received from National Park Service personnel, who have made research materials available to us, guided us through the park, reviewed drafts, and hosted our public presentation in Medora. These include: Amy McCann, Valerie Naylor, Wendy Ross, Chad Sexton, Don Stevens, and Bill Whitworth.

At Colorado State University, we appreciate the invaluable support from the History Department, College of Liberal Arts, and Office of Sponsored Programs, especially Lisa Anaya Esquibel, Michael Carolan, Ann Gill, Sara Payne, Nancy Rehe, Charlene Spencer, Stephan Weiler, Ben Withers, and Doug Yarrington.

For guidance through archival materials, we thank Pamela Pierce at Dickinson State University and Susan Quinnell at the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office. We also appreciate the many hours of professional editing by Richard Orsi.

We offer a big thank-you to all of these generous colleagues.

Table of Contents

Introduction	
Nicholas Gunvaldson	7
1. “A Trade as Lucrative as It Is Extensive”: Indigenous Visions for the Big World of the Upper Missouri River, 13,000 B.C.-1803	
Jared Orsi	14
2. One Land, Two Visions: Declining American Indian Independence, 1780s-1890s	
Jared Orsi	35
3. “Pioneers of Civilization”: Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands	
Mark Boxell	54
4. Theodore Roosevelt, the Global West, and the Conservation Movement, 1887-1919	
Nicholas Gunvaldson	75
5. The Homesteading Era: An Agrarian Society in the Badlands, 1898-1937	
Clara Keyt	93
6. The New Deal and Park Beginnings	
Clara Keyt with Kailee Swolley	116
7. Mission 66 and the Modernization of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, 1947-1972	
Janet Ore	135
8. Theodore Roosevelt National Park in the Environmental Age: Resources under Threat, 1973-2014	
Janet Ore	153
Conclusion	
Hannah Braun	180
Appendix A: Resources Master List	
Maren Bzdek	184
Appendix B: Maps of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Vicinity	216
Bibliography	218

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Introduction

Nicholas R. Gunvaldson

For centuries, humans have projected cultural meanings onto the area that today comprises Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Remote, unstable, inaccessible, and often dangerous, the region has continued to fascinate and challenge people since American Indians first called it home. As different groups have sojourned there, the landscape has changed dramatically, often as a direct result of human modification. Long before Theodore Roosevelt came to hunt bison and bighorn sheep, American Indians used the area as a grand corridor connecting the Badlands to a much larger world. In this sense, the history of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and its surroundings can be told by examining a series of visions that people have projected and then enacted upon the land.

By “visions,” we mean the human ability to imagine alternatives to the way things are. A thousand years ago, Plains peoples looked at bison herds and saw the possibility of killing more than they needed to eat and trading the excess for items they could not otherwise access. Late nineteenth-century homesteaders saw a sea of grass and imagined plowed soil and fertile farms. Postwar conservationists saw eroded gullies, depleted wildlife, and dilapidated buildings and fences and imagined restoring a functioning ecosystem. For millennia, these and many other visions have inspired people to act out their imaginations, changing both themselves and their landscape in the process. This Historic Resource Study tells that story at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Description of Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Located on 70,446 acres of Badlands territory in western North Dakota, Theodore Roosevelt National Park is divided into three geographically separate areas known as the South Unit, the Elkhorn Ranch Unit, and the North Unit. Visitors to the park encounter a diverse landscape that changes from season to season. In summer and fall, brown and spindly grasses dominate the river valleys and hillsides until the spring, when they briefly emerge bright green, accented by countless wild flowers. Winter is harsh and unforgiving, cloaking the ragged Badlands terrain in a deep blanket of snow. In Theodore Roosevelt’s words, the winter “turns the green, grassy prairies of midsummer into iron-bound wastes.”¹ Despite climatic hardship, humans have lived in the Little Missouri Badlands for more than ten thousand years, although permanent habitations did not appear until late in the nineteenth century. The park’s jagged buttes, grand plateaus, sprawling river valleys, and shimmering mixed-grass prairies maintain a high degree of resource integrity enabling visitors to imagine a relatively unspoiled Little Missouri Badlands environment.

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter* (New York City: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1893), 93.



Little Missouri Badlands, River Bend Overlook, North Unit. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

Two features connect the three units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The first feature is natural—the cottonwood-lined Little Missouri River—which carries sediments north from Wyoming through the South Unit and Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch site, then turns east and runs through the North Unit before joining the Missouri River. The second feature, the ninety-six mile long Maah Daah Hey Trail, is cultural, and reflects a twentieth-century American vision of outdoor recreation. It is the longest single-track mountain bike trail in the United States and operates as a unique transect through the Badlands. In addition, curvilinear roads bisect each park unit, providing access to unique and breathtaking terrain while also fundamentally shaping the way visitors see and interact with the Badlands.

Managing the wildlife that lives in Theodore Roosevelt National Park and visits from outside is of critical importance today just as it was in the time of Theodore Roosevelt. Perhaps paradoxically, the man who would one day stand at the forefront of the American conservation movement initially arrived in the Dakota Territory to hunt bison and other large game. Roosevelt’s popular books and articles about hunting in the West shed light on his visions of the Badlands. Even as he glorified the hunt, Roosevelt lamented the ongoing eradication of bison, elk, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep from the lands around Elkhorn Ranch. The biological

profile of the park has always been in flux, and the park's animals have always existed as part of a much larger world. One only needs to look at the seven-foot-tall fence that surrounds the park today and constrains the movement of the park's reintroduced bison to see how visions of modern natural resource management have collided with Roosevelt's time spent hunting and ranching in the Dakota Territory.

Human Visions and Environmental Realities

The mission of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is to “preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of the park for the benefit and enjoyment of this and future generations, and to honor Theodore Roosevelt’s conservation legacy.”² In doing so, the park has set its baseline for interpretation and natural resource management in the year 1883, when a young and eager Theodore Roosevelt first stepped off the train in the Dakota Territory, excited about the prospect of surviving in a wild and trying place. This vision says a lot about the goals of the National Park Service, but it is only one of the latest visions of how to most effectively use and manage the land. While the Park Service attempts to preserve the landscape in a way that is evocative of Theodore Roosevelt’s time in this inspiring place, the world around the park continues to change, and each change challenges the park’s vision of land stewardship.

The built and natural landscapes of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are therefore products of this historic tension between dynamic human visions and a dynamic natural environment. Over the last ten thousand years since human beings have imbued the place with meaning, the landscape has changed, but not always in ways that humans intended. In the last two centuries, human-induced change has accelerated as different groups have competed to remake the land in a harsh environment that could not always support all their goals.

Today, the park exists as a tangible expression of this tension. As fossil fuel extraction booms around it, the park occupies an uneasy middle ground between America’s environmental ethic and its pursuit of hydrocarbon wealth and energy independence. Contested visions for the park continue to define both its current management and its role within a broader industrializing rural landscape. This interplay between contemporary visions reflects continuity in the region’s environmental and cultural history even as it continues to alter the landscape itself and the people in it. While such tensions may not be fully resolved any time soon, the park can facilitate movement toward a balance in the region. For all who experience its beauty, the park stands as a unique visual and physical testament to the region’s natural and cultural histories, a product of historic tensions between visions and actions that shaped the park—and to a greater extent, the entire Little Missouri Badlands—into its current form.

² National Park Service, *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Long Range Interpretive Plan* (Harpers Ferry: Interpretive Planning Services, Harpers Ferry Center, 2011), 9, accessed April 15, 2016 http://www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/ip/THRO_LRIP.pdf.

Scope and Purpose of the Historic Resource Study

This Historic Resource Study demonstrates that the history of the area has unfolded as a succession of visions of how to use local resources in order to flourish in an increasingly large world. Many of these resources are readily identifiable within the park today, such as the Elkhorn Ranch site, but other park resources, like plant and animal species, are more subtle and need explanation in relation to the broader historic context. Divided into eight chronological chapters that identify and explicate the history of the region that became Theodore Roosevelt National Park, this study establishes historic contexts within which to evaluate park resources. Using these historic contexts, administrators can prepare National Register of Historic Places nominations and implement preservation measures. The document serves as a tool for future site planning, resource management, and continued development of the park's interpretive programs. Theodore Roosevelt National Park's history as both a cultural and natural park drives this document's explicitly environmental history approach; the report treats together both cultural and natural resources, traditionally thought of as separate.

Following the eight chapters of historic context, the final section in this Historic Resource Study discusses specific historic resources in the park and provides a short description of the historical significance of each. Whereas the preceding chapters examine Theodore Roosevelt National Park as a series of visions about how to use the Badlands, this section zeroes in on how that history changes the way humans interpret park resources. This section lists and annotates historic resources from each of the park's historic periods, investigating the significance behind notable resources such as indigenous cultural sites, campgrounds and culverts, feral horses and invasive plants, and extant and non-extant architectural sites. Cultural and natural resources from the recent National Park Service period, including those that are less than fifty years old, are considered for their future historic significance.

Visions of the Land: The History of Theodore Roosevelt National Park

The history of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is as complex and multifaceted as its namesake was. Over time, many people have come to call the buttes, prairies, and coulees of the Badlands home. In doing so, men and women from across the world have adapted local resources to solve immediate problems, and when necessary, import resources from far away. The broader history of western North Dakota reflects this ongoing struggle over the acquisition and control of resources. The history of the park and human visions of the land correspond to four distinct periods.

Early Environmental Adaptations on the Northern Plains (13,000 B.C. – 1880s)

In this era, as chapters 1 and 2 elucidate, ancient and historic indigenous peoples and early Euro-American explorers, traders, and settlers adapted to the environment of what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Of key importance were the cultural and material outcomes of those adaptations, including their manifestations in the landscape on the eve of Theodore Roosevelt's arrival.

Archeological evidence suggests that people have traveled through and used the Northern Plains for thousands of years. A revolution occurred around 1700 with the arrival of the horse. Soon after, new native peoples, with their own visions of possibilities for the land, came onto the Plains and interacted with the environment through hunting, trade, social relations, and warfare, causing both the environment and culture to change in unexpected ways. At about the same time, Euro-Americans began to expand the fringes of their world to the edge of the Plains. They had different visions of the land, seeing the Plains as a reservoir of resources that they could convert into capital through commerce in far-away markets. Ultimately, however, the environment did not always produce enough resources to accommodate both American Indian and Euro American visions, and the ensuing violence accompanied dramatic environmental and cultural change. By the eve of Roosevelt's arrival a combination of war, disease, population decline, cultural decimation, and forced relocation had largely subdued indigenous groups in the Badlands. The landscape was also changing as the penetration of railroad systems prompted an increased wave of migration to the West after the Civil War. As these settlers traveled across the frontier, their visions and subsequent actions profoundly affected local environments.

The Roosevelt Era (1880s – 1920s)

A new era dawned on the Badlands region with the beginning of the cattle boom and Theodore Roosevelt's arrival in 1883. Through an analysis of Roosevelt's interaction with the landscape, chapters 3 and 4 place that experience within the context of the future president's broader political career, and especially his conservation legacy. After the cattle industry's boom and bust came Euro-American settlement in the Badlands, as discussed in chapter 5. The homesteader boom lasted until the Great Depression, when many homesteaders sold their land to the federal government and departed. Many evidences of the cattle industry, Roosevelt's life in the region, and early homesteaders survive in the park today and help elucidate interpretations and understandings of the park's historic resources.

After 1880, the North Dakota Badlands witnessed a rapid economic boom as the final frontier for the open-range cattle ranching industry. As ranchers and cowboys flocked to the area, they brought particular visions about what they hoped to accomplish. In 1883, Theodore Roosevelt first visited the Dakota Territory intent on hunting the vanishing American bison, but ended up investing in two separate cattle operations. Though Roosevelt rarely visited the region after 1887, his time spent hunting, ranching, and living in the Badlands exemplified nineteenth century notions of masculinity and significantly influenced the development of his conservation ethic. Later, as president of the United States, he drew on his experiences in the Badlands to promote a national vision of western landscape conservation.

After North Dakota gained statehood in 1890, homesteaders and settlers flooded into the Badlands. Settlers carried visions of how to use the environment for individual and collective betterment. Building an agricultural community on crop and livestock production, many homesteaders thrived on the Northern Plains. Today, both extant and non-extant homestead sites demonstrate a vision of the land that differed from that of their predecessors. With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, widespread economic decline combined with severe drought devastated many Badlands settlers. As a result, large numbers of farmers and ranchers left the land, and many families sold their properties to the federal government.

The New Deal Era (1930s – 1947)

Federal government officials' visions for the land during and after the Great Depression altered the Little Missouri Badlands and culminated in the area's designation as a national memorial park in 1947, as discussed in chapter 6. The Civilian Conservation Corps, envisioned and enacted as a federal response to national economic crisis, played a substantial role in the region during the 1930s. New Deal legislation established two Civilian Conservation Corps camps on newly acquired state lands that later became the North and South Units of the park. In 1936, the National Park Service took over, designating the area as the Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area. This began ten years of restructuring and organizing as state and federal agencies discussed who would manage the area and how. Various government visions competed to define the region's future and determine which agency would manage its historic and natural resources. In 1947, Congressman William Lemke succeeded in getting the area designated as Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.

The National Park Service Era (1947 – Present)

Upon its integration into the National Park Service, the park became part of a broad national vision that sought to preserve significant public lands while balancing conservation and development. Chapters 7 and 8 consider the history of the area's management as a national park and the national and local conversations about management issues. Today, as the region experiences rapid industrial development, the tension between industrial expansion on the park boundaries and the park's conservation mandate profoundly influences the daily administration of the park.



Entrance to Painted Canyon Overlook. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi.

For the first thirty years of National Park Service operation of the area as a memorial park, administrators struggled with the mandate to interpret the site in a way that preserved the history of Theodore Roosevelt in the area. Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park saw its period of greatest development between 1955 and 1965, when the vision of Mission 66 molded the park into an efficient, modern landscape designed to support tourist enjoyment and public education about the park's historic purpose. This period, in which "high modernism" came to characterize federal land management, is crucial for understanding the park today. Evidence of this period's explicit focus on flow and circulation, standardization, and division of functions remain in surviving cultural and natural resources, all of which are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1978, Congress renamed the park as Theodore Roosevelt National Park and designated nearly one third of its area as wilderness. This decision reflected a new vision of park management that reflected broader national shifts in federal management policies for public lands. As scientific knowledge increasingly shaped park administration, researchers and managers began to identify and more fully understand the park's ecological functions. Important issues came to dominate staff efforts such as wildlife management—especially feral horses, bison, elk, and bighorn sheep—exotic and invasive species, prescribed fire, recreation and tourism, wilderness, and oil extraction. Perhaps one of the most significant management faced by the park is managing the effects of the Bakken fracking boom, which began in 2006, and, more recently, its bust. As industrial development increasingly surrounds the park, it underscores the major tension between the park's mandate for wilderness preservation and the industrialization of the Northern Plains.

Visions of the Future

The historic resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park preserve and convey a long history of human use in the Badlands and reflect the continuing reciprocity between people, their visions and actions, and the realities of the environment. Throughout the region's history, tensions between peoples' visions for the land and their varying abilities to enact them changed the landscape and its ecosystems in ways still manifest in the park.

Today, the park represents a symbolic refuge within an increasingly industrialized rural landscape, a stark visual reminder of the challenges associated with wilderness preservation and protection of nationally significant cultural resources. As conflict between park preservation and development associated with the boom and bust cycles of oil extraction continues to mount, Theodore Roosevelt National Park will face an increasingly difficult period in its history as it attempts to maintain its ecological and cultural place within the Badlands.

Chapter 1

“A Trade As Lucrative as It Is Extensive”: Indigenous Visions for the Big World of the Upper Missouri River, 13,000 B.C.-1803

Jared Orsi

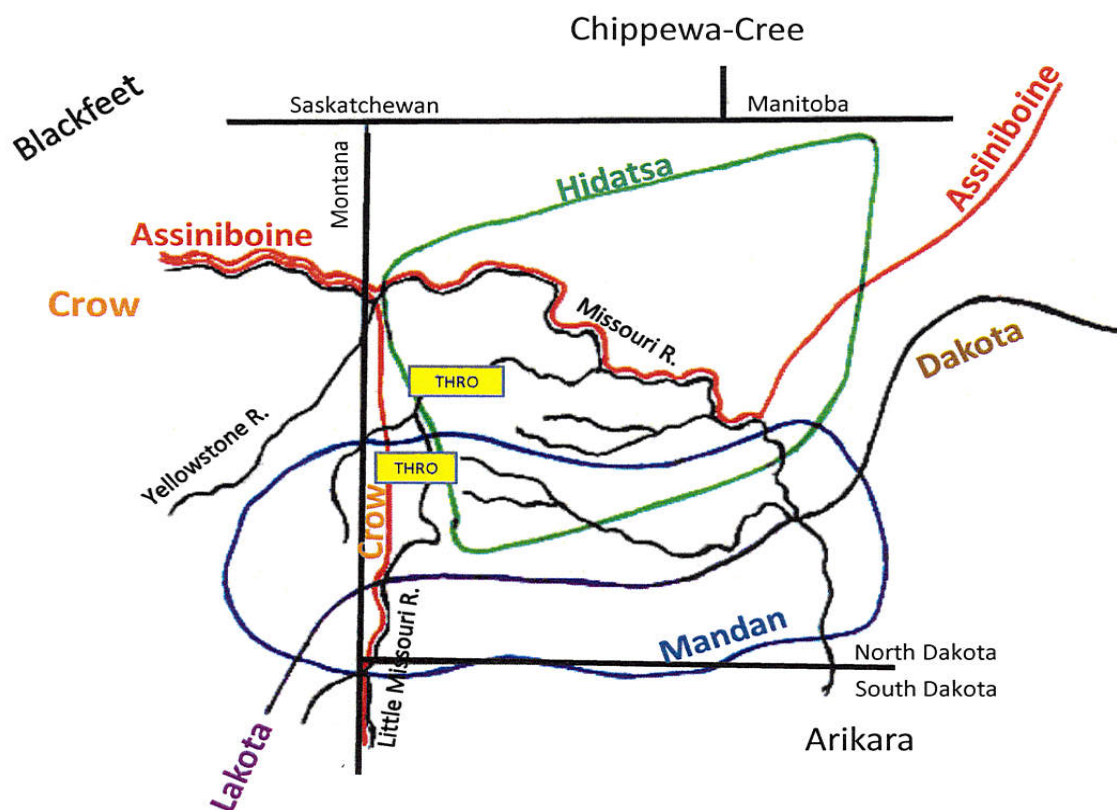
A Big World

Oil is only the latest mineral to tie North Dakota to the world. On June 9, 2012, North Dakotans gathered near Dunn Center, thirty-five miles east of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, to dedicate a new National Historic Landmark. The site commemorates a ten-thousand year-old quarry from which ancient Plains peoples extracted Knife River flint. Knife River flint was the most important of several silica-bearing geologic deposits in the area. Because they could easily work and sharpen it, the earliest Plains dwellers used the precious dark-colored stone to make tools, weapons, and other essentials that enabled humans to flourish on the Plains at the end of the last ice age. Although originating only in western North Dakota at a few sites like Dunn Center, the unassuming mineral traveled far. Archeologists have turned up items made from Knife River flint in Canada, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana. Probably, specialized local artisans crafted tools from the mineral and traded them far and wide. It is also likely that some people came from afar to quarry the material themselves. Archeologists have not located any Knife River flint quarries within the present boundaries of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, though they have discovered projectile points made from the substance. Whether early people extracted the mineral within the present-day park or merely carried it through, it appears that the first North Dakotans' commercial ties spanned much of the North American continent.¹

As the trade dispersion of Knife River flint indicates, the early people of western North Dakota lived in a big world. They interacted with forces, objects, ideas, and peoples from beyond the immediate vicinity of their daily lives. People have lived near the Little Missouri Badlands for more than ten thousand years, but until the nineteenth century, none made permanent homes there. By the eighteenth century, Mandan territory overlapped what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park's South Unit, but not the North Unit or the Elkhorn Unit. Hidatsa territory reached up the Little Missouri River but not as far as the North Unit. Crow territory ended at the western bank of the Little Missouri in southwestern North Dakota. Lakota, Nakota, Arikara, Assiniboine, Cree, and Blackfoot territories also approached the park's boundaries. Prehistoric and historic

¹ Lauren Donovan, “North Dakota’s Knife River Flint Quarry Named National Historic Landmark,” *Bismarck Tribune*, June 6, 2012, accessed April 15, 2016, http://bismarcktribune.com/news/state-and-regional/north-dakota-s-knife-river-flint-quarry-named-national-historic/article_1cc9c820-b020-11e1-a906-0019bb2963f4.html; Maria Zedeño et. al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota*, (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2006), 27; Ed Murphy, “Knife River Flint and Other Siliceous Rocks in Western North Dakota” *Geo News* 4, no. 1 (January 2014): 1–7, <https://www.dmr.nd.gov/ndgs/newsletter/2014Winter.asp>.

evidence suggests that many people came there, much as they came to Dunn Center, to quarry Knife River flint. They hunted game, butchered and processed it, gathered food, extracted clay, trapped eagles, collected dyes from plants and clays, undertook spiritual retreats, and traversed the river's ridgelines and draws to get from one place to another. Until the nineteenth century, the Badlands were used by many but owned by none.



Approximate tribal territories as of late eighteenth century.²

This raises four points essential to understanding human occupation of the region. First, the Little Missouri River Badlands are a difficult environment, rich in useful things, but not a good place for humans to settle. Second, peoples in the region have coped with the difficult environment in part by moving about. Third, for most of human history in southwestern North Dakota, people viewed land in terms of uses and multiple users, not as property with single owners. Finally, the Little Missouri River Badlands have always been part of a much larger

² Map adapted from maps in Zedeño, et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 68, 83, 96, 110, 126, 140, 152, and 174.

world. Theodore Roosevelt National Park, then, cannot be understood without reference to the world beyond its borders, sometimes far beyond.



Like they do for modern national park hikers, Ridgelines provide the first North Dakotans easy passage through the craggy terrain badlands terrain. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi.

Difficult Environment

Theodore Roosevelt National Park has documented more than three hundred archeological sites. None, however, date from the Paleoindian period (9500-5500 BCE) and few from the early Archaic (after 5500 BCE).³ For example, bison bones dot the bases of a few escarpments and the steep sides of canyons and gullies, and remains of the camps of ancient hunters rest on the flatter uplands above. Curiously, most of these bone scatters date from the last two thousand years, despite the likelihood that the Badlands teemed with game for a few thousand years before that. Why would people not have come to take bison from this rich area,

³ Zedeño et al., “Cultural Affiliation Statement,” 56, 59, 62.

just as they came to Dunn Center for Knife River flint? One anthropologist has called this underrepresentation of older bison kill sites “enigmatic.”⁴

The answer probably lies in the recent formation and geomorphological dynamism of the Little Missouri Badlands. The story of the Badlands, which the Lakotas called *Mako sica*, or “land bad,” goes back some 70 million years to the beginnings of a mountain-building episode known as the Laramide Orogeny. In keeping with the big world theme, the events began far away, with continental plate movements beneath the Pacific Ocean, and resulted in the uplift of the North American continental plate and the formation of the Rocky Mountains. For millions of years, as the mountains rose, weather wore them down, and wind and water carried the resulting debris east to the Great Plains, including the area now encompassed by the park. Glaciation in the late Quaternary period rerouted the Missouri River, which had once flowed to Hudson Bay, and bent it and its tributaries, including the Little Missouri River, to the east. The glaciers also initiated river down-cutting, resulting in significant erosion. Patterns of deposition and erosion due to glaciation, flooding, freezing, and other processes have continued up to the present. In addition, exposed lignite coal veins, which future homesteaders would exploit to heat their homes, formed in the bottoms of swamps at a time when North Dakota’s climate was much wetter. These veins have frequently ignited during prairie fires, and have heated and hardened underground layers of rock that endured once the softer material around them eroded away. Since their formation, then, the Badlands have not been a stable place. Much of the current Badlands landforms are less than two thousand years old. The flood plain itself is only a hundred and fifty years old. Older kill sites are unlikely to have survived the dynamism of geological processes that formed the current landscape. The paucity of faunal remains older than two millennia points not to human absence but rather to the difficulty of doing archeology in geomorphologically dynamic settings.⁵

In fact, the forces that erased early human presence had also attracted it in the first place.⁶ Knife River flint is a case in point. Within the park boundaries, it lies in secondary deposits built by millions of years of geological stratification and erosion. Knife River flint is not known to exist any longer anywhere—in or out of the park—in primary, or original, strata. Remains exist only as pebbles, cobbles, and boulders in secondary deposits eroded from no longer extant original ones. The modern park, however, overlies the original boundaries of the Golden Valley Formation, an Eocene formation thought to be the original source of Knife River flint. During

⁴ David D. Kuehn, “A Geoarchaeological Assessment of Bison Kill Site Preservation in the Little Missouri Badlands,” *Plains Anthropologist* 42, no. 161 (August 1997): 319, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25669486?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁵ Kuehn, “Geoarchaeological Assessment,” 319, 321, 326; Zedeño et al., “Cultural Affiliation Statement,” 57. *Mako sica*, which has several spelling variants, including *Makosika* and *Ma-ko'-shi-ka*, is a term meaning “land bad” or “bad earth” that the Lakota applied not only to the Little Missouri Badlands but to other similar formations in places such as South Dakota and Montana. See Badlands National Park, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/badl/faqs.htm>; John P. Bluemle, “North Dakota Notes No. 12,” North Dakota Geological Survey, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://www.dmr.nd.gov/ndgs/ndnotes/ndn12.htm>; Ethan Shaw, “How did the Badlands Get Its Name?” USA Today, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://traveltips.usatoday.com/did-badlands-national-park-its-name-13162.html>; “Makoshika State Park,” Montana State Parks, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://stateparks.mt.gov/makoshika/>. Despite extensive searching, the author has been unable to determine the names that other cultures applied to the Badlands.

⁶ Kuehn, “Geoarchaeological Assessment,” 326.

the Eocene, primary Knife River flint strata formed through the silicification of lignite (a mineral that subsequent Euro-American settlers used to heat their homes). As primary strata eroded, remnants broke off and were deposited among other formations, which were in turn eroded. The bits of Knife River flint, which attracted early peoples to western North Dakota and likely to places within today's park boundaries, became accessible to humans only by enduring geological processes that eroded a thousand feet of material below them over tens of millions of years.⁷

The landscape that resulted from such geological dynamism provided other benefits to people as well. The Little Missouri Badlands surround a highly eroded trench that cuts through the flatlands of the plains. The resulting topographical mosaic yields gradients of elevation, temperature, aspects to the sun, soil moisture, and wind exposure—microclimates that could offer just a little more or less warmth, coolness, or water, and make the difference between comfort or misery, and even life and death, to the human beings and organisms that depended on them. Fingers of the uplands—whose appearance one Crow man compared to chicken feet—descend into the trough and are divided by steep, often well-watered drainages.⁸ The bottoms are relatively well-watered riparian lands. Because of the water and the elevation gradient, in contrast to the comparatively ecologically homogeneous upland grasslands these draws and bottomlands provide varied habitat for plants and animals, including nine different ecological zones: river bottoms, hardwood draws, upland grasslands, rolling grasslands, terraces, upland breaks, river breaks, toe slopes, and hilly scoria.⁹ Fish, mostly catfish, swam the Little Missouri. Mammals large and small ambled, leapt, or scurried between the highlands and river bottoms. Soil type and moisture gradients meant that certain plant communities covered the uplands, others the lowlands. Wet north-facing slopes were clearly more identifiable than dry, south facing ones, supporting a diverse plant community and creating a consistent pattern across the landscape. Timber from hardwoods and evergreens provided fuel and material for tools. All of this was accessible to humans within an area they could traverse on a seasonal, sometimes even daily basis. To match such biodiversity on the grasslands to the east would require journeys of dozens or even hundreds of miles. If people could tolerate the extreme weather, the Little Missouri Badlands had much to offer human beings.

⁷ Ed Murphy, "Knife River Flint"; Lee Clayton, W. B. Bickley Jr., and W. J. Stone, "Knife River Flint," *Plains Anthropologist* 15, no. 50 (November 1970): 282–290.

⁸ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 241.

⁹ Kuehn, "Geoarchaeological Assessment," 325–326; Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 57.



Oxbow Overlook in the North Unit displays the Little Missouri Badlands' ecological mosaic of river bottoms, lush draws, and bluff-top grasslands all in close proximity, 2013. Photo by Maren Bzdek.

For more than ten thousand years, people have been coming to the Little Missouri Badlands. We know about them from the archeological evidence they left behind, their lithic workshops, bison kill sites and processing areas, campsites, conical timbered lodges, and eagle trapping locations.¹⁰ The peoples who came to the Badlands hunted and fished. They acquired minerals like chalcedony, gypsum, chert, and Knife River flint. They sought spiritual experiences among the magical buttes and haunting Badlands formations. They gathered plants and trapped eagles. Perhaps most importantly, they traveled. The Little Missouri was a corridor by which people from the Plains enlarged their world by reaching the Bighorn Mountains and other highlands. The corridor also brought nomads from the west to trade in Plains villages. Dating to the Paleoindian period, the Missouri River villages were centers of North American trade, and the Little Missouri was a key route that people used to get to and from other places. Its ridgelines are dotted with temporary campsites, indicating its long use as a travel corridor.¹¹ Many resources in Theodore Roosevelt National Park testify to this. Some—like bison herds, eagle trapping blinds, and archeological sites—are extant, while others not. However, the landscape that made these activities possible does remain and can be preserved and interpreted to show the large world to which the Badlands were tied ecologically, economically, and culturally.

¹⁰ Zedeño et al., “Cultural Affiliation Statement,” 57.

¹¹ Zedeño et al., “Cultural Affiliation Statement,” 4-5, 23; Roy W. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 3-4.



Projectile point from Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Photo by NPS.¹²

Despite the abundance, however, the Badlands were no Eden. They are part of a larger Great Plains ecosystem, in which long, cold winters, short growing seasons, fierce winds, and less than fifteen inches of precipitation on average presented challenges to even the most resourceful peoples. Even more challenging was the variability. Some years—even some decades or centuries—bring much moisture, enough to grow wet-climate crops without irrigation. Others bring day upon day of cloudless skies. Temperatures in a given year—or even on occasion in a matter of days—can vary more than a hundred degrees. Here, the law of the minimum applies. Whatever or whoever tries to live on the Plains must be able to endure the leanest times—the harshest winters, the driest seasons. Whatever the minimum nature provides, all organisms, including Plains peoples, must cope.¹³ These challenges required adaptation and accommodation and sometimes even regional migration.

Early Plains Dwellers

Archeologists call the period before about 1000 CE the Pre-Plains Village period, and they divide it into three parts: Paleoindian (9500-5500 BCE), Plains Archaic (5500 BCE-400 CE), and Plains Woodland (400 CE-1000 CE). The first people in the upper Missouri River region arrived shortly after the retreats of the last glaciers and hunted Pleistocene megafauna. They and their successors lived in groups and identified with particular loosely defined territories. They drew their subsistence from a variety of plants and animals in a variety of environments. After the Altithermal, a warming and drying period that ended about 5,000 years

¹² Theodore Roosevelt National Park website, <https://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/historyculture/cultural-history.htm>.

¹³ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

ago and that witnessed the extinction of the big game mammals, people put greater emphasis on foraging and contracted the geographic range of their contact with other peoples. The people of the Plains Woodland era may have practiced some agriculture. Archeologists question whether any of these groups are directly related to the modern tribes that have inhabited the region.¹⁴

However, the American Indians of the region today describe their origins vividly. The Mandans have two creation stories, one in which they emerged as a distinct people originating in the vicinity of the Heart River and another that places their origins on the Mississippi near the Gulf of Mexico, with a subsequent upstream migration.¹⁵ One of several Hidatsa stories tells of First Creator bringing people up from beneath the earth at Devil's Lake, North Dakota, and decreeing that they would scatter in small groups; in migrating from Devil's Lake, the people separated into the Awaxawi Hidatsas, Hidatsas proper, and Crows.¹⁶ One Arikara story holds that the womb of Mother Earth birthed them, and they then migrated westward. Other Arikara posit origins near a southern mountain and that they then migrated northward through the Black Hills to the Missouri River.¹⁷ The Crows tell of their ancestors wandering though the Midwest and into Canada before coming to Devil's Lake, where two brothers each received a vision. One was told to settle on the rivers and plant corn; his descendants became the Hidatsas. The other, told to seek Sacred Tobacco seeds, sought them south to the Canadian River and west to the Great Salt Lake, fasting along the way, before finding the seeds in the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming; his descendants became the Crows.¹⁸ What all the stories share, and what anthropologists do not dispute, is ethno-genesis through movement and ancient ties to the upper Missouri.

Archeologists narrate the formation of modern tribes using material artifacts rather than cultural traditions, but they come to conclusions roughly compatible with tribal renditions. Around 900 CE, perhaps earlier, new people came onto the Plains from what is now southwestern Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. They established villages on the Missouri River and depended equally on farming and hunting, especially bison. Archeologists cautiously consider these people the first identifiable ancestors of the Mandans.¹⁹ Around this time, another group, known to modern archeologists as the Central Plains Tradition, formed to the south. These Caddoan speakers were probably the progenitors of the modern Pawnee and Arikara. By 1400, they began moving north into the upper Missouri region, probably in response to long-term drought, which was less pronounced on the Northern Plains. The proto-Mandan people appear to have retreated northward, possibly in response to environmental conditions such as drought or timber shortages or in response to conflict with the Caddoan newcomers. In the sixteenth and continuing into the seventeenth centuries, a third culture, the ancestors of the Hidatsas (also sometimes called Minataree or Gros Ventre) arrived from what is now eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota. The reasons for their migrations are not clear. Perhaps they were responding to pressures resulting from westward migrations of eastern tribes. They adopted material culture

¹⁴ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 26-28; Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 4-5.

¹⁵ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 69.

¹⁶ "The History and Culture of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Sahnish: Hidatsa Creation Narrative," North Dakota State Government- ND Studies, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.ndstudies.org/resources/IndianStudies/threeaffiliated/culture_hidatsa1.html.

¹⁷ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 97.

¹⁸ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 112.

¹⁹ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 5-6.

and lifeways nearly indistinguishable from the Mandans. At some point, perhaps on more than one occasion, bands split off from the Hidatsas and became the Crows. Thus between approximately 900 and 1700, archeologists believe, the modern configuration of culturally and territorially distinct tribes emerged.²⁰ As they peopled the Plains along the upper Missouri River, they mixed hunting, farming, foraging, and trading to accommodate to the environmental and political difficulties they faced, some of which originated from afar, but to which they were able to adapt with some success.

Movement

In a difficult environment that does not provide everything needed, people can do two things. They can move about, going where the things they need are, or they can stay put and move stuff around, bringing in what they need from other places. Peoples of the upper Missouri River did a little of both, although the exact balance varied and sometimes changed over time. In all cases, a cultural group's decision to move or stay put influenced their relationship to places like the Little Missouri Badlands and often defined them as a people.

One strategy was to stay put and move stuff around. The Mandans, likely the first of the modern tribes to people the upper Missouri, mastered this adaptation.²¹ Of all the upper Missouri tribes, the Mandans were the most sedentary. Farming defined their seasonal cycle of spring planting, summer hunting, fall harvest, and winter hunkering down. They planted their fields in the floodplain of the Missouri River and tributaries, where the soils were rich, irrigation water was readily available, and the microclimate allowed for a growing season that was slightly longer than on the plains, which were two to four hundred feet higher in elevation and therefore colder. The Mandans grew squash, beans, and sunflowers, but most importantly, they grew corn. Their corn was not the warm weather variety that developed in Mesoamerica, but rather a strain that could endure the cold, aridity, and short growing season of the Northern Plains. Under the cultivation and manipulation of the Mandans and numerous other peoples, it had evolved through a centuries-long process into a plant that could mature in the sixty to seventy days the Northern Plains reliably delivered between frosts.²² This highly modified plant not only fed the Mandans, but many others around them as well. Hunters came from hundreds of miles around and brought their kills (protein) to the Mandan villages to exchange for corn (carbohydrates) and other horticultural products, making the Mandan villages commercial hubs for a far-flung trade not only in foodstuffs, but hides, tools, ornaments, news and more.²³ The eighteenth-century French explorer Pierre de la Vérendrye, for example, met a party of Crees and Assiniboines near the present Minnesota-Manitoba border who planned to travel to the upper Missouri to buy corn.²⁴ Mandan trade drew not only from the Plains but also reached west across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Northwest, east to the prairies and woodlands of the Great Lakes region, south to

²⁰ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 33.

²¹ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 4.

²² Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 2-3.

²³ Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York City: Hill and Wang, 2014), 227-233; Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 15.

²⁴ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 230.

the Rio Grande, and north to Hudson Bay.²⁵ Through the villages of the Mandan middlemen passed shells from the Gulf Coast, copper from the Great Lakes, and obsidian from the upper Yellowstone.²⁶ Long before any European ever donned a hat made from a North American beaver pelt, the Mandan villages were a center of a commerce that spanned the continent. Corn fueled their prosperous sedentary life ways by bringing from afar what they could not produce or acquire locally.

That is not to say, however, that the Mandans did not travel. They did. But other tribes did so even more. While wintering with the Mandans in January 1805, a member of the Lewis and Clark party participated in a ceremony to attract bison to the villages. It worked, and bison appeared in the vicinity within days.²⁷ When ritual or trade failed to produce the necessary bounty, however, the Mandans regularly traveled west to where the shaggy animals were more plentiful, including to the Little Missouri Badlands. Raiding, warfare, and eagle trapping also drew villagers away from their homes.²⁸ Moreover, unlike other groups to the south, such as the Pawnees, whose entire population would abandon their agricultural villages for the summer, Mandan mobility was mostly a masculine endeavor and never involved an entire village.



Bison jump site within the boundaries of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi.

²⁵ Zedeño et al., “Cultural Affiliation Statement,” 71-72.

²⁶ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 16.

²⁷ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 221.

²⁸ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 147.

Most other tribes of the upper Missouri, however, adopted mobility strategies more extensively. Next along the continuum were the Hidatsas and Arikara, horticulturalists who grew a range of crops like the Mandans and supported themselves in substantial ways through farming, but who traveled west to hunt bison every summer. Sacagawea, a Shoshone captured as a young girl by Hidatsa raiders in western Montana and who later as a young adult joined the Lewis and Clark expedition from her adoptive village in North Dakota, testifies to the wide range of the Hidatsas. Next along the continuum were the Crows, a group who split from the Hidatsas perhaps as recently as the early historic period. The Crows were primarily a nomadic hunter-warrior society, though they did grow a little tobacco for ceremonial purposes.²⁹ Among Siouan-speaking peoples, the easternmost branch (the Dakotas) remained in the upper Mississippi Valley as a hunter-forager people who also farmed some as well, but the middle branch (the Nakotas) and the western branch (the Lakotas) adopted horses in the middle of the eighteenth century and moved west to the upper Missouri. By the 1760s, they were exclusively mobile peoples who did not engage in farming, although they often used trading and raiding to acquire the fruits of farmers' efforts. The Assiniboinés were similarly nomadic.

Today the Little Missouri Badlands, including Theodore Roosevelt National Park, illustrates the ways that all groups, wherever they fit on the continuum, employed mobility as an essential strategy for subsistence and identity as a people. Peoples as close as the Hidatsas on the Missouri and as far away as the Crees on Manitoba's prairies came to the Badlands to hunt deer and bighorn sheep. They also collected clay for making pots.³⁰ For the Crows, the Little Missouri River was a thoroughfare connecting their high Plains homelands with their trading partners on the upper Missouri River.³¹ One historian has suggested that the frequent location of horticulturalists' villages on the western bank of the Missouri indicates their orientation toward the bison and other resources to the west. Many reasons may account for why the Mandans chose the mouth of the Heart River for the hearth of their communities, but one likely part of their logic was that it flowed from highlands near the Little Missouri Badlands and was therefore a natural route between there and the Missouri. Stationing themselves at the mouth of the Heart allowed them to capture trade from western mobile peoples, much like a gas station or motel at an interchange might attract business from an interstate.³² A similar logic about location likely applied when the Mandans later moved north to the confluence of the Missouri and the Knife River. From the northwest, the Blood Tribe—the Blackfoot people of Canada—claim ties to Knife River flint archeological sites in the park.³³ The peoples surrounding the Little Missouri Badlands had detailed knowledge of and substantive material connections to the vicinity.

A bison hunt to the game-rich Little Missouri Badlands, or anywhere else on the western Plains, would have been a community affair. At the very least, it would have involved dozens of male hunters of perhaps an entire village, depending on the tribe. Everyone involved would have had a role. The game-rich Little Missouri might have been a destination in itself or simply a spot to quench thirst and restock while looking for the elusive bison herds. After a kill, it would have

²⁹ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 121.

³⁰ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 89-91.

³¹ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 111.

³² Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 16.

³³ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 257.

been an ideal camping place while women processed the carcasses, butchering the animals, drying the meat, removing the hides, and collecting the many usable parts of the bison. Bison were the *sine qua non* of Plains Indian existence. Its meat was sustenance. Its hide was clothing and shelter. Bones were tools. Stomach was storage. Horns were ornamental. Its soul lay at the heart of the people's spirituality. They worshipped, imitated, and prayed to the bison. While the butchers disassembled the catch, other women might gather medicinal plants. Children might gather roots, herbs, and tubers. Men might hunt or fish. Men and women might collect pigments and minerals.³⁴ It was like a weeks-long trip to the grocery store, enabling the tribe to supply for a season or more. The park's bison herd today, though it was re-introduced to the area in the 1950s and has no genetic link to the animals that inhabited the Badlands centuries ago, is a resource requiring not only ecological management, but cultural management as well. The herd is a symbol of and opportunity to interpret an era and mobile way of life that is no more, but was once an ingenious adaptation that allowed people in the difficult upper Missouri environment to flourish.

Sometimes, bison hunting in the Badlands had a dual purpose: eagle trapping. An American Indian informant told anthropologist Gilbert Wilson of an occasion in which hunters ecstatically discovered a bison herd. "The black bears have sent the buffalo to us," they exclaimed. "May they also send eagles."³⁵ Sheer, high cliffs and ecological diversity that abounded in rodents made the Badlands ideal eagle habitat, especially for golden eagles, whose east-west migration route crossed the Little Missouri River. Fall and winter bison forays to the Badlands, therefore, also included male eagle hunters and often, if the village did not need to be defended from enemies, entire communities. Most Northern Plains tribes hunted eagles, though the Mandans and Hidatsas claimed the Little Missouri River among their particular hunting



Golden Eagle. Photo by NPS.³⁶

³⁴ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 237, 247, 252, 254.

³⁵ Walter Allen, "Eagle Trapping Along the Little Missouri River," *North Dakota History* 50, no. 1 (1983): 5.

³⁶ Theodore Roosevelt National Park website, <https://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/historyculture/cultural-history.htm>.

grounds. Eagle hunting required an entire complex of structures, including a lodge for conducting the rituals necessary to ensure a successful hunt. An eagle-trapping lodge was usually conical in shape, approximately a dozen or so feet in diameter at its base, and made of timber. It often doubled for shelter during bison hunts and other Badlands activities. Nearby would be a temporary camp or tipis for women and others who fed and cared for the hunters.

The trapping itself took place in rectangular pits, just large enough for a man. Trappers dug the pits into the flat tops of ridges, usually near a west-facing precipice, covered them in brush, and baited them with a dead rabbit or other carcass.³⁷ A trapper would sit or lie down in the hole, with his head and body concealed under the covering, and wait. Eagles swoop down into the wind, using the resistance to control their maneuvers as they dive, and spread their wings and stretch out their legs right as they approach the ground. Just as the talons closed on the bait, the ensconced trapper would reach up, grab the eagle by the legs, and wrestle from it the highly prized tail feathers. Feathers and talons were used for personal and ceremonial ornamentation. Feathers were also essential features of the calumet, a pipe made from catlinite pipestone quarried in southwestern Minnesota and smoked in ceremonies by which unrelated people acknowledged ties and enabled the transactions of friendly relations.³⁸ “In a world of rivalries, uncertainty, and competition,” the historian Elizabeth Fenn wrote, the calumet “let strangers, even enemies, mingle peaceably. It forged alliances. It generated trade. It built relationships.”³⁹ No wonder that the twelve feathers of a complete tail was valued in trade as the equivalent of a horse.⁴⁰ Mobility—including forays to the Little Missouri River to acquire eagle feathers—facilitated the movement of goods that enabled the Mandans and the Hidatsas to stay put. The remains of lodges in Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s North Unit date at least to the 1880s before the onset of the homesteading, when eagle trapping died out, replaced by the use of guns and metal arrow points.⁴¹

The consequence of mobility and trade were visions of territory and property where boundaries were fluid, overlapping, and defined by uses (not ownership) and multiple users. Eagle trapping reflected such understandings. The lodges and pits generally lay far from villages in territory not occupied by any single tribe. Although the Mandans and the Hidatsas claimed the Little Missouri River among their particular hunting grounds, most Northern Plains tribes hunted eagles, many of them in or near what became Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Within a tribe, trapping access was restricted to individuals, almost exclusively males, who had acquired rights to do so. Such rights were user rights. If you had them, you could trap in particular places, but your right did not exclude other uses or users. It did not allow you to prevent other people from hunting bison, gathering herbs, or quarrying minerals for dye in the same place. It did not prevent others from trapping nearby as well. It conferred only the right to use the place yourself. People could acquire rights through vision spiritual quests or dreams or could receive them from other individuals who already had such rights and agreed to transfer them. Either way, they were

³⁷ Allen, “Eagle Trapping,” 16; Zedeño et al., “Cultural Affiliation Statement,” 239, 244.

³⁸ Allen, “Eagle Trapping,” 4, 8, 10, 16.

³⁹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 38-39.

⁴⁰ Allen, “Eagle Trapping,” 4.

⁴¹ Allen, “Eagle Trapping,” 12, 19.

marked by possession of bundles of small tokens such as a bear's foot, eagle feathers, a pipe, or similar objects of personal or sacred value. Possession of a bundle signified that the owner had mastered the proper rituals and therefore earned the right to trap.⁴² The Little Missouri Badlands were one of many places of spiritual and subsistence significance, and like others, they were to be used, not owned, not unlike the function of a national park for future North Dakotans.

That is not to say that the American Indians of the upper Missouri had no sense of boundaries. The existence of the calumet ceremony as a way of welcoming outsiders testifies to that, as does the reluctance of the Assiniboinés and Crees to escort French explorer La Verendrye into what they understood to be Mandan territory in 1738.⁴³ Sometimes a treaty enforced such boundaries, other times violence. Still, borders applied to core heartlands for most tribes, with vast spaces in between unclaimed by any single group. The confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, for example, was a gathering place for the Crows from the southwest, the Blackfoot from the northwest, Assiniboinés from the northeast, and Hidatsas, Mandans, and Arikara from the southeast.⁴⁴ All came to trade and travel by river corridors in the area, yet none claimed it exclusively for themselves. Similarly, the catlinite pipestone quarries in southwestern Minnesota drew peoples from hundreds of miles around and induced them to suspend hostilities while they were there together. William Clark marveled at the Mandan chief Sheheke's detailed knowledge of Montana geography.⁴⁵ Far afield from anywhere the Mandans claimed as their own, Montana nevertheless constituted a place visited often enough for a leading figure of the tribe to memorize its features. Of course, peoples did not always share spaces peacefully. This is evidenced by how well the Mandans and Hidatsas hid their eagle trapping lodges in the Badlands to shield them from enemy Lakotas, who also traversed the Little Missouri River.⁴⁶ Whether at peace or in conflict, Sheheke and other people of the Plains lived in a big world, where faraway places were considered home because they were used, and intruders were tolerated close by because territory claims were not exclusive and their boundaries were often ill-defined and their uses shared.

This worked at the level of individual and family property as well as tribal territories. Depending on the tribe, members used various mechanisms to apportion rights to farm, hunt, or otherwise capture the fruits of the land. Yet land itself was not alienable. An individual or family might have the right to gather berries in a particular place, but they did not own the bush or ground where it grew. Indeed, taboos cautioned against the harm that would come from trying to claim the land for selfish reasons. In one Hidatsa story, for example, a bear occupied another's den. As punishment for seizing his neighbor's legitimate use of nature's bounty, the intruder went crazy.⁴⁷ Often rights within a tribe would be allocated with bundles. As in the case of eagle trapping, people could not usually purchase bundles, but rather earned them through good deeds and strong character, study and preparation, visions or dreams, and generally through the willing transfer of the rights and privileges accompanying the bundle by one who already owned it. In

⁴² Allen, "Eagle Trapping," 6-7, 20-21; Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 239.

⁴³ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 87-95.

⁴⁴ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 43.

⁴⁵ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 85.

⁴⁶ Allen, "Eagle Trapping," 21.

⁴⁷ Melvin R. Gilmore, *Prairie Smoke* (New York City: AMS Press, 1966), 98-99.

additional to eagle trapping rights, bundles could confer the right to heal, lead, hunt, or engage in other important activities.

Property and boundary practices accommodated American Indians to their big world. They envisioned the plains, mountains, prairies, woodlands, and rivers as a large world, filled with good things that were spread out, necessitating both travel and commerce, moving people and moving stuff. Adaptation choices—move stuff to people or move people to stuff—were limited, but until the nineteenth century, native peoples of the Northern Plains maintained a fair amount of control over them. Although they had few opportunities to overcome nature's constraints, they developed ingenious methods for making survival, even thriving, possible, and they maintained their ability to choose what to incorporate from outside and what to reject. Soon, new peoples, animals, and goods from outside the American Indians' conceptual world would extend the natives' ability to overcome nature's constraints at the same time that their ability to choose what to incorporate declined. When Europeans, with their penchant for setting fixed boundaries, began to show up, it would bring big changes for the peoples of the upper Missouri River: their world would get bigger. Today the park, although very much itself a product of boundary drawing, is one of the last remaining remnants of space that symbolizes the old life way (including viewsheds and soundscapes) and where it can be practiced and remembered.

A Bigger World: Horses, Trade, and Smallpox

Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, had heard rumors about American Indians occupying the grasslands far to the west. With this in mind, he launched an expedition from Canada that reached the Mandans on December 3, 1738. He stayed with them for approximately ten days and then left among them one of his men to learn the natives' language and culture as an anchor for future commercial relations. In 1742, he sent his two sons, Francois and Louis-Joseph, to return to the village. Under a Mandan escort, they continued beyond the village to the west to look for a group the French called the *Gens des Chevaux*, or Horse People, whom the La Vérendrye brothers hoped would lead the Frenchmen to the Pacific Ocean. Francois's account is unclear about the identity of this group, but what better place to look for mounted nomads than the Little Missouri Badlands, and so it was there that the Mandan guides took their peripatetic visitors. The party passed through the Badlands, on to the Bighorn Mountains, and back across the Plains to the Little Missouri River.⁴⁸ Other than to marvel at the "earths of different colors, such as blue, a kind of vermilion, grass green glossy black, chalk white, and others the color of ocher," Francois had little to say about the Badlands.⁴⁹ He had missed their significance for those who came to trap eagles, hunt bison, or procure Knife River flint.

Whether they took interest in the Badlands or not, the adventurers were part of a larger movement that was beginning to change the region. For instance, Francois noted that the Mandans had horses, something they had not had when his father had come four years earlier.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 137-138.

⁴⁹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 138.

⁵⁰ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 134-136.

The brothers also met a Spanish-speaking Arikara man, who called himself a Christian and who described a thriving trade between his tribe and the Spaniards, whose nearest settlement was more than eight hundred miles to the south.⁵¹ White people's yearning for commerce and adventure in the land of the upper Missouri River would not abate even a century and a half later when Theodore Roosevelt stepped off a train perhaps not far from where the La Vérendrye brothers had passed. Initially, horses and European trade promised to expand American Indian independence in their big world by overcoming space and environmental constraints in their quest for sustenance and, increasingly, profit. However, with the new opportunities of this expanded world, American Indians were increasingly subject to decisions and actions that took place out of their sight and without their ability to influence the outcomes. As the world got larger, Plains people's ability to control it declined. Eventually, the big world turned deadly.

Although the exact circumstances have been lost, the Mandans appear to have acquired horses around the time of the visits of the La Vérendrye brothers. Other groups—as evidenced by French names for them such as *Gens des Chevaux*—appear to have acquired them even earlier.⁵² The process of transfer of horses from the white people who inhabited the rim of the Great Plains to the American Indians who lived within began in the mid-seventeenth century and got a dramatic boost from the Pueblo Revolt of the 1680s. With Spaniards temporarily expelled from the Rio Grande Valley, horses went wild and began spreading from New Mexico and were captured by various American Indian groups. In addition, Puebloan peoples began trading horses to Utes and other groups, who also frequently stole the animals. Trading and raiding diffused from there, and by the end of the century, most Central Plains peoples had at least some familiarity with the beasts. Northern Plains tribes had horses by the middle of the eighteenth century. Some peoples such as the Blackfoot acquired horses before they ever saw a white person.⁵³ The North American trade network proved capable of spreading European goods far and wide too, something not lost on the Europeans.

The impact of horses on Northern Plains culture varied by tribe and depended on the extent to which they were willing to change themselves in order to accommodate the animals. For the Lakotas, the westernmost branch of the Siouan speakers, horses were truly revolutionary. By the late seventeenth century, Siouan speakers were already migrating south and west out of their woodland homelands of central Minnesota, displaced by better-armed peoples from the east who sought pelts to feed the European market's appetite for furs. Gradually, all the divisions of these peoples moved toward the prairies of southwestern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa, and the eastern Dakotas. By the mid-eighteenth century, some Lakotas had reached and even crossed the Missouri River, adopting horses and becoming an entirely nomadic people by the 1770s.⁵⁴ A similar story applies to the horticultural Cheyennes. For these and other groups, the horse offered expansive possibilities for independence and expansion of power. According to historian Elliott West, the eighteenth century brought the first rush to the Plains, as eastern woodlands and prairie

⁵¹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 140.

⁵² Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 138.

⁵³ John C. Ewers, "The Acquisition of the Horse," in *Lewis & Clark and the Indian Country: The Native American Perspective*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie and Jay T. Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 19-26.

⁵⁴ Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 50-53; Raymond J. DeMallie, "Sioux Until 1850," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, Vol. 13, Part 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 727.

people flocked to the steppes inspired by their visions of the possibilities that mounted life offered. For these groups, the adoption of horses entailed a process of ethno-genesis, as they became new peoples.⁵⁵ Horse-borne, they followed the bison seasonally, trailing the herds through the summer and wintering along the wooded riparian zones of the plains, where bison congregated.⁵⁶ They also opportunistically raided Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa villages, seizing foodstuffs, horses, and captives. The Lakota military advantage over other tribes stemmed partly from their eastern location, which gave them access to European firearms, and partly from their greater mobility in comparison to the river villagers, who adopted horses to a lesser extent.

In contrast, the Mandans were little affected by their acquisition of horses, which likely occurred sometime around 1740. This reflected a blend of ecological, economic, and cultural factors. The Mandans lived right on the cusp of an invisible but decisive climatic boundary dividing the Northern Plains, where horses had a hard time surviving the harsh winters, and areas to the south where warmer temperatures and lighter snowfall fostered better year round grazing conditions.⁵⁷ Further incorporation of horses into their culture would have required greater mobility in a continuous search for feed for the herds and abandoning the village life that secured Mandan subsistence and defined their identity. Some groups like the planters-turned-hunters Cheyennes and the woodland hunter-gatherer Lakotas and Nakotas found this tradeoff worth it. According to historian Elizabeth Fenn, the Mandans' minimal incorporation of the horse likely indicates their deep cultural attachment to the security and tradition of horticultural life. That is not to say horses were not important. The Mandans became energetic equine traffickers, receiving them from the Cheyennes, Crows, Arapaho, Kiowas, and other groups to the west and south, where climes were warmer and horse-rich Spanish settlements closer. The Mandans then traded the horses to the north and east to the Lakotas, Nakotas, Dakotas, Assiniboinés, and Crees, who were chronically short of mounts because of the difficult northern winters but rich in firearms and other European goods, which white and mixed-race traders brought from Europe via Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes. As Antoine Tabeau, the chronicler for a Spanish fur trade company, noted in 1791, "all the rivers, which empty into the Missouri above the Yellowstone, are frequented by a swarm of nations with whom, at the post of the Mandanes, a trade, as extensive as it is lucrative, can be carried on."⁵⁸ Horses, then, amplified the Mandan role as semi-sedentary middlemen by expanding the variety of goods in which they dealt and extending their networks across the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ West, *The Contested Plains*.

⁵⁶ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 162.

⁵⁷ Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁵⁸ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 72.

⁵⁹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 132-142.



Grass is the Great Plains' greatest and most abundant resource. The arrival of horses transformed the possibilities for American Indians by enabling them to tap the energy stored in grasses and put it to use in travel and hauling. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

One of the biggest consequences of horses for all Northern Plains peoples was the incorporation of European objects into their world. Before the end of the Seven Years War (1754-1763), the French were the most frequent visitors, though English goods from Hudson Bay sometimes made their way to the upper Missouri River. After the war expelled the French crown from North America, British traders dominated the region, although a few Spanish expeditions emanated from St. Louis. Americans joined in after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Regardless of the flag they traveled under, the traders themselves were an eclectic bunch. Frenchman came from the Great Lakes as unlicensed traders even after Britain claimed sovereignty over the region. Scotsmen headed Spanish expeditions.⁶⁰ People of every conceivable mixture of European and American Indian heritage—themselves biological manifestations of the cultural and economic intermingling that the fur trade spawned—worked for everybody.

Whatever their national origins, European boats and caravans brought kettles, axes, knives, glass beads, cloth, traps, guns, and more. Things traveled far and rapidly.⁶¹ On the cusp of a capitalist and industrial transformation, European workshops buzzed with energy, turning raw materials from the Americas and elsewhere into manufactured goods that American Indians

⁶⁰ Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 48-49; A. P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); W. Raymond Wood, *Prologue to Lewis and Clark: The Mackay and Evans Expedition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

⁶¹ Wood, *Prologue to Lewis and Clark*, 24-27.

found curious, useful, and, increasingly, essential. Europeans, in turn, occasionally needed food, horses, or basic supplies, but mostly they craved furs.⁶² And so American Indians of the Northern Plains hunted and skinned bison, bears, deer, elk, badgers, wolverines, otters, and, above all, beaver to exchange for European wares. Thus, many tribes of the upper Missouri River flourished. Their numbers increased. Their wealth expanded. So did their military power. Metal, cloth, horses, and guns enhanced their command of their material world.

Horses and trade were not without disruptive effects, however. Intertribal warfare intensified, as peoples competed for access to European traders and the animal resources that satisfied them. Beginning a trend that would last into the reservation period and not reverse until the late twentieth century, women's status within tribes declined as the rise of high-status masculine institutions such as hunting and fighting distorted the traditional complementarity between masculine and feminine productive labor.⁶³ Perhaps most importantly, American Indians inched toward dependence on European manufactures. At first, European baubles were handy but not necessary. So independent were American Indians of their European supplies that sometimes they did not even always use the goods in the ways traders intended. Clearly, for example, those who sometimes cut kettles into arrowheads, knives, and decorative ornaments were not desperate for cookware. However, as guns became increasingly essential to hunting and defense against enemies, Plains people depended on the people who made the bullets and powder. American Indians whose hunting constituted more than subsistence and who relied on the market to supply not only traps but the goods they would have made themselves during the hours they spent hunting and trapping needed a steady supply of manufactured goods. As the number of European objects one owned increasingly marked personal status, American Indians hungered for more.

Despite their revolutionary possibilities, these changes were at first slow and uneven. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, American Indians held a good bargaining position. European governments and armies were remote and their foothold in North America beyond its eastern shores weak. Moreover, different nationalities of Europeans competed with one another. Tribes who did not like the goods, prices, or behaviors of one caravan or flotilla could always wait for the next. If the British tried to bully them, the tribes could court the French. American Indians, therefore, had a good deal of control over prices, trade partners, and the resulting relationships of commerce. Amid all of this, however, the impact of Europeans was accelerated by something more deadly. The world got even bigger because of something very small.

In the late 1770s and early 1780s, smallpox swept North America. Between 1775 and 1782, it killed more people than the American Revolution did. Its devastation stretched from Mexico City to Hudson Bay and from the Virginia Tidewater to the mouth of the Columbia River. It hampered General Richard Montgomery's ill-fated campaign to capture Quebec early in the American Revolution. It helped break the back of Hopi resistance to Spanish incursions west

⁶² Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 67-68.

⁶³ Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 74-75.

of the Rio Grande. It alarmed British traders at York Factory on Hudson Bay.⁶⁴ And in 1781, it made its way to the Mandan villages at the confluence of the Heart and Missouri rivers.

How it got there is not clear, though given the extensive trade network to which the villages were tied, its eventual appearance was nearly a sure thing.⁶⁵ The first smallpox epidemic to strike the Northern Plains was likely in 1734, when the Arikara and others were victimized.⁶⁶ Although little is known about this first episode, it appears to have paled in comparison to the pestilence of 1781. Regardless of how it arrived on the Plains, horses and trade carried the plague farther and faster in 1781 than ever before. Historian Elizabeth Fenn, who has studied both Mandan history and the North American epidemic extensively, believes it likely came via the Shoshones, who acquired it from their Comanche kinsmen at a trade fair. The Comanche probably acquired it during their many dealings with Spanish Santa Fe, which sat at the northern end of a well-traveled route to Mexico City, where a 1779 outbreak has been documented. From the Shoshones, the path is open to speculation. Did those horse-borne people carry it themselves to the upper Missouri River? Or did they give it to their trade partners, the Crows, frequent visitors themselves to the Mandan towns? Given the importance of the Little Missouri River as a corridor from Wyoming and Montana to the villages on the Missouri River, it is possible that the infected carrier stopped to let his horse drink from the waters that would a century later cool the throats of Theodore Roosevelt's stock. However, so dense was the Mandan trade network that the virus could have come by any of many different routes—quite possibly even more than one.⁶⁷

When smallpox arrived, it would have taken several weeks to explode, but once it did, the effects were devastating. The Lakotas and other mobile peoples who moved constantly and in small bands appear to have been spared the worst of its effects, but the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikara, living in large, concentrated towns with year-round residents, were particularly vulnerable to crowd diseases. In sad irony, the commercial success and dense settlements—the very markers of the river tribes' eighteenth-century prosperity—proved maladaptive once smallpox struck. People did not just die, but died in large numbers all at once in agonizing, disfiguring deaths. Before the epidemic let up a few months later, the villages would have reached the point where there were not enough people to care for the sick or bury the dead, and some of those lucky enough to escape the plague would have succumbed to starvation and other side effects brought on by the epidemic's devastation. The plague's aftermath damaged American Indians' social structure. The Mandan, who had numbered thirteen clans before the pestilence, merged into only seven. Reduced in population, the Mandan were now vulnerable to the increased raiding of nomads. They moved upstream to the mouth of the Knife River to be nearer to their Hidatsa friends. The Arikara, too, moved upstream and occupied the lands vacated by the Mandans. Traders from St. Louis reported that the Arikara had been reduced from thirty-two communities to two.⁶⁸ The Lakotas, however, reigned as the unchallenged military power on the upper Missouri. Horses and trade, and the microbes that tagged along with them, had reconfigured the human geography of the Northern Plains.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York City: Hill and Wang, 2001), 62-71, 161-163, 167-195.

⁶⁵ Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 144.

⁶⁶ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 71.

⁶⁷ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the Earth*, 155-157; Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 139-140, 144.

⁶⁸ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the Earth*, 159, 165-166, 171-172.

Conclusion

It is easy for visitors to Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, which passes not far to the north, to imagine the Corps of Discovery as having entered a wilderness, untouched and unchanged since time immemorial. From the perspective of a people who have figured out how to inject fluid into the ground to force out the liquid remains of plants from hundreds of millions of years ago and to burn the fluid in machines that power vehicles and heat homes, perhaps the North Dakota that Lewis and Clark encountered does look unmodified. From the perspective of the 1780s, however, the century and a half preceding their visit, from the time of the first European contact to the end of the smallpox epidemic, had in fact witnessed much change. The anthropologist Guy Gibbon observed that for Siouan speakers “fundamental transformations took place in subsistence and settlement patterns and material culture.”⁶⁹ The same can be said of other Plains peoples. Between the middle of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth, a new hooved herbivore appeared on the Plains, changing the region’s ecology and energy flows and transforming subsistence, warfare, trade, and power relations among the peoples. New American Indians and then Europeans appeared on the Plains as well, and they were themselves transformed by coming there. There were fewer people alive in the villages and more on horseback. Populations of game animals were in decline, in the case of beavers dramatically so. The reach of the native peoples’ world stretched beyond their ability to imagine or control effects that came from afar. No longer did they exercise sole power to choose what to accept and what to reject from other cultures. The vision of independence as mobile hunters was firing the nomads’ imaginations. The hopes for settled security in the upper Missouri River villages had been dealt a blow, but were not extinguished. New peoples with completely different visions of how to use, bound, and profit from the land congregated on the rim of the Plains, eager to enter in large numbers and with big effects. By conserving grasslands, bison, eagle trapping sites, and other resources, Theodore Roosevelt National Park has an opportunity to protect and interpret a remnant of a North America that was far more connected far earlier than most Americans imagine the continent to have been. In 1781, Washington was still fighting for independence, Jefferson had not yet purchased the Louisiana Territory, Lewis and Clark had not yet crossed the continent, and Theodore Roosevelt had not yet reveled in North Dakota’s apparent remoteness. Yet already, the Little Missouri Badlands were integrated into a web of germs and goods that tied the people who trapped eagles and quarried Knife River flint to a very big world.

⁶⁹ Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 48.

Chapter 2

One Land, Two Visions: Declining American Indian Independence, 1780s-1890s

Jared Orsi

In the 1780s, as historian Elizabeth Fenn has noted, there were two ways of living on the Northern Plains.¹ People could hunt on the grasslands or farm along the rivers. Trading the take of the chase for the fruit of the field enhanced each strategy, and both methods depended on peoples' ability to move about freely as well as on the availability of good places—with water, game, fuel, construction materials, access to travel routes, and fertile soil—for staying put. A century later, the peoples of the upper Missouri Valley were desperate. The formerly well-wooded bottomlands were now denuded. Bison herds had dwindled, and powerful enemies constrained villagers' ability to pursue the animals that remained. The railroad sliced across the people's lands, and passengers fired rifles through open windows and slaughtered animals from passing trains. Ranching and homestead claims began to subdivide the open lands into bounded parcels as the newcomers put up fences. Inter-tribal trade had virtually ended.² Unable to access the resources necessary for survival, the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikara conjoined onto their first reservation in April 1870.

One group, however, led by a man named Crow Flies High, refused reservation life and instead adopted a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Composed mostly of Hidatsas and a few Mandans and Arikaras, the band was at once radical and conservative. In breaking from the village, it defied traditional communal authority, but did so in the name of maintaining historic independence, a tall order in practice. Their world now intersected with a larger one, and the defectors had to mix traditional lifeways with new ones. In the summer, they cut wood to supply fuel for the steamboats that plied the Missouri River. In the winter, they hunted and cut more wood for the vessels' voracious furnaces. They also provided services to the mushrooming network of forts. As they pieced together a living, the Little Missouri River basin, still largely devoid of American settlement, provided a font of resources and a vital travel corridor. In maintaining their traditional autonomy and mobility by working for steamboats and forts, the Crow Flies High band continued an age-old pattern of adaptability to change. Much had changed in the previous century, but adaptation remained a constant.

The change that necessitated both reservations and woodcutting was that the Plains peoples' ecosystem grew larger. That is, by the late nineteenth century larger-scale forces that originated farther away shaped the ecosystem. Large, remote communities in which the natives had little or no say drove these forces. The logics that sent steamboats up the river or led newcomers to shoot bison from trains operated more or less invisibly and incomprehensibly from

¹ Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York City: Hill and Wang, 2014), 243.

² W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818: The Narratives of John Macdonell, David Thompson, Francois-Antoine Larocque, and Charles McKenzie* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 8.

the point of view of the Crow Flies High band and other Plains peoples. This expansion of the ecosystem occurred through two more or less concurrent processes: commercialization and nationalization. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, European and American newcomers brought capitalist market values—the habit of commodifying resources and drawing boundaries—and gradually insinuated them into the rules of Plains commerce. By mid-century, the U.S. government drew on its administrative and military power to enforce these practices. Together, commercialization and nationalization constituted a new vision of how to survive and profit on the Plains that was distinct from American Indians’ visions. The new order fundamentally altered both the environment and the ability of people to access what remained. Where Europeans and Americans had once relied on Plains peoples to help them access resources—indeed even to survive at all on the Plains—by the late nineteenth century, the newcomers had enabled themselves to act out their visions autonomously and made American Indians dependent in the process.



Squaw Creek, North Unit. The Three Affiliated Tribes Museum indicates that the Crow Flies High band camped or established a small village near here, just outside the modern park’s boundaries. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi.³

³ Maria Zedeño et. al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota*, (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2006),

Rim of the Plains: Commercialization and the Fur Trade

The rise of a commercial trade in furs initiated these changes. By the time smallpox gripped the upper Missouri villages in the 1780s, Europeans had come to the rim of the Plains, establishing towns like Santa Fe and St. Louis and smaller settlements on the Great Lakes, the shores of Hudson Bay, and the tributaries of the Mississippi and the largest Canadian rivers. Opportunists of all nationalities eyed the untapped bounty of fur-bearing mammals inhabiting the streams of the Plains and Rocky Mountains.

Prior to the La Verendryes' visits, people on the Northern Plains had experienced little direct interaction with Europeans. Most contact was indirect—the acquisition of goods, horses, arms, and crowd diseases through American Indian intermediaries, especially the Shoshones and Assiniboiné. Between 1738 and 1763, French traders made a few forays into the region, but these efforts were small-scale and left scant record. The British established the first sustained European contact with the peoples of the Northern Plains. From the establishment of a fur collection center at Fort Pine in 1785 to supply the trade on the upper Mississippi until the War of 1812, traders from British Canada supplied manufactured goods to American Indians, who trapped and hunted mammals along the rivers of the Northern Plains. Two large companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company, regularly sent emissaries to broker the exchange, and at their peak, the two firms controlled 93 percent of the fur trade.⁴

In the 1790s, Spaniards based in St. Louis joined the act, sending numerous expeditions upstream, two of which succeeded in reaching the Knife River villages. One emissary in Spanish employ, John Evans, wintered among the Mandans in 1796-1797 and seethed at the unabashed presence of Canadian traders in territory claimed by the Spanish crown. He officially took possession of the Northwest Company's post among the Mandans and sent a proclamation to the firm forbidding British trade in the area.⁵ Both Mandans and Canadians ignored the edict. The Spaniards' futile assertion of sovereignty illustrates Europeans' short-term impotence to dictate the terms of the fur trade, while hinting at nation-states' long-term impulse to draw boundaries around territory and to establish sovereignty over resources and trade within them, a practice foreign to the Plains peoples' ways of thinking. It also shows the Mandans' enthusiasm for acquiring European goods regardless of the trading partner. In fact, the more numerous, varied, and competitive the trading partners were, the better the American Indians' bargaining position.

Throughout this early period, the tribes generally held the upper hand in such exchanges. The traders could not always meet their own resource needs on the Plains by themselves. The journey from European outposts was arduous, and travelers were always vulnerable to bad weather, American Indian attacks, hunger, injury, and more. Some did not manage to complete the journey, and others refused to undertake it at all.⁶ Those who did could do so largely because of the promise of hospitable hosts at the far end. While among the villagers, the Canadians lived in their hosts' lodges, often paying rent with their trade goods. They bought corn and other food

⁴ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 18-47.

⁵ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 25-29.

⁶ Zedeño et al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 49.

from the locals.⁷ They also purchased horses, though not always, as they learned, at fair prices. For example, one man in 1796 found himself in “distress” when his horses died in severe weather in route to the Mandan village. Without them, he would be unable to haul away the furs he acquired there. Like the modern Plains automobile driver who pays a surcharge at the pump in proportion to the distance to the next gas station, the traveler forked over a steep price to acquire some of the Mandan mounts.⁸ The Mandans and other hosts were established, in the literal sense of the Latin root word: made stable. That is, they could feed, clothe, and shelter themselves, and they could move about according to their desires. The traders could not. That fact tilted the balance of power in most exchanges in the American Indians’ favor. Thus continued an old Mandan tradition. Hospitality fostered relationships. Relationships fostered trade. Trade fostered more hospitality, relationships, and trade. By the 1790s, the historian Elizabeth Fenn noted, the Knife River Villages “were awash in British goods.”⁹ The Mandans and their Hidatsa friends were the wealthiest people on the Plains. Although winter brought hunger to some, starvation was almost unheard of. It was not a bad way to live.

The world, however, was getting too big. European merchandise, even when purchased for a song, carried the seeds of great transformation. The goods originated in a much larger world, which operated according to dynamics the villagers neither understand nor controlled. Whites produced these goods far away, out of sight, and moved them according to logics that American Indians could not control. Every kettle or rifle, and the accompanying improvement in life, nudged the acquirers closer to the day when they could not live without such items. When that day came, the big world’s rules of commerce would dictate transactions on the Plains and constrain the Plains peoples’ ability to secure the resources they needed to provision themselves.

The gap between the American Indians’ visions of commerce and those of the big world was evident when the Canadian Alexander Henry led an expedition to the Knife River villages in July 1806. The Mandan chief greeted them and sent a youngster to look after their horses. He invited Henry and his companions into a lodge and put one of his wives at their disposal as cook, water bearer, and, if desired, sexual partner. They dined on meat, beans, and corn. Meanwhile villages gathered around to see what goods the Canadians had brought. Henry, however, announced he had not come to “trade,” but rather to “visit them and see the country.” That mystified them, and Henry feared they suspected him of holding out on them so he could trade with another village. “They plagued us until dark,” he wrote in his journal, “when they retired disappointed.” Not easily discouraged, however, the Mandans sent some young women to the Canadians’ lodge that evening, offering sexual favors. Again, to their puzzlement, Henry turned them away. The next morning, he “purchased” various supplies with “ammunitions, etc.” “Was this not trading?” the Mandans must have wondered. They trotted out their wares again, only to be once more disappointed when Henry soon halted the bartering, saying he had all he needed

⁷ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 231-233, 237.

⁸ Wood and Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 65.

⁹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 182.

and more than his horses could carry. Still not getting it, the Mandans offered to sell him more horses.¹⁰

Underlying this misunderstanding were two distinct visions of trade. The Mandans traded to acquire essential resources and build relationships to facilitate future provisioning. These relationships not only fostered more trade, but also formed reciprocal obligations for future considerations among the parties and encouraged peace. At the Knife River villages, welcoming, eating, trading, and sexual intercourse were integrated components of a process to acquire the resources for a good life and ensure the social relationships to sustain it. To Henry, however, these things were distinct acts. For him, the point of a transaction was to reach an agreement on price that left both partners satisfied so that neither incurred further obligation. That one had come to visit did not necessarily mean one had come to trade. Europeans like Henry—and the Americans who came after—conceived of resources as discrete, fungible items with a particular exchange value as commodities. Individuals could exchange commodities of comparable value for one another or for cash, which they could then use to purchase things in other markets. At one level, American Indian trade and Euro-American commercialization were both systems that enabled exchange of needed resources and distributed their benefits. However, in the American Indian system, articles such as beaver pelts retained their connection to ecological and social relationships—the trapper still had to live in an environment shaped by beaver (or the absence thereof) and share social space with trade partners. Euro-Americans, in contrast, envisioned commodities as separate from their environmental and social contexts. They reduced the pelts to one quality—price—and then exported them out of their contexts or acquired them only for profitable resale, not for use. Although the fur trade was the first step, environmental historian Ted Steinberg observed that on a national scale, nineteenth-century commodification put “a price tag on the natural world,” drew it into a “web of commerce,” and “led to sweeping changes.”¹¹

In Henry’s day, however, the native vision still predominated. Traders usually had to accommodate it or go home for inability to support themselves without Plains peoples’ friendship. In a land of cutthroat commercial competition among trading houses, populous villages that could summon thousands of warriors at a moment’s notice, and mounted nomads armed and able to strike unexpectedly against the slogging trading parties, the traders found it expedient to curry favor with their American Indian trade partners. This required playing by American Indian rules, at least at first.¹² Consequently, they married native women, smoked with native men, and gave generous gifts to open the door to trading. Over the next century, however, commercialization gradually supplanted the Plains peoples’ ways of trading and they were forced

¹⁰ Alexander Henry, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry, Fur Trader of the Northwest Company, and of David Thompson, Official Geographer and Explorer of the Same Company, 1799-1814*, vol. 1, ed. Elliott Coues (New York City: Francis P. Harper, 1897), 324-328; Alexander Street Press, *Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures and the Environment*, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://solomon.eena.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu:2048/cgi-bin/asp/philo/eena/getpart.pl?S3190-D067>. The previous year, the Mandan had also expected that Lewis and Clark had come to trade and were surprised and suspicious of the Corps of Discovery, who looked like traders, but did not want to engage in trade other than for immediate necessities. See also James P. Ronda, “Exploring the Explorers: Great Plains Peoples and the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1993): 85.

¹¹ Theodore Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2002), xi-xii.

¹² Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 68-69.

to play by the outsiders' rules. Soon, commerce would put a price on bison hides and then wheat and beef and even land itself and draw the entire Plains ecosystem into national and international commodities markets. By century's end, not only the Mandans, but also the Hidatsas, Arikaras, Lakotas, and all other native peoples were dependent on whites for provision of the most basic resources necessary for their survival.

A significant step along this path occurred in 1803. In that year, United States President Thomas Jefferson launched the Lewis and Clark expedition, which wintered among the upper Missouri tribes in 1804-1805. While planning for the expedition, Jefferson had engineered the Louisiana Purchase. Britain, Spain, and the United States disputed the territory's boundaries, with each nation claiming overlapping pieces of it. The ultimate victor in this contest would be the nation that could map and occupy it earliest and most successfully, and especially acquire those vital friendships with American Indians. A significant goal of the Lewis and Clark expedition, then, was to contact Plains peoples and sway them away from Canadian traders.¹³ The villagers understood friendly relations, but puzzled, as they had with Henry, over the party's reluctance to trade. Instead, the visitors spent their time charting the stars, recording the weather, studying plants and animals, and asking pesky questions about native customs and distant lands to the west. The villagers were accustomed to traveling for trade or warfare or the hunt, but they had no conceptual or linguistic category for going out to learn about unknown lands.

It all made perfect sense to Jefferson, who had asked the captains to do exactly these things. Mastery of latitude and longitude, climatology, botany, zoology, geography, and ethnology not only would satisfy Jefferson's Enlightenment thirst for data but would also enable the American state to better comprehend the West and put the United States at an advantage over Britain and Spain in administering it and achieving sovereignty over it.¹⁴ Consequently, when Lewis made his speech to his hosts on October 29, 1804, he declared that the Arikaras, Hidatsas, and Mandans gathered there were now American "children," subject to the United States government. He demanded that they cease commerce with British and other traders not licensed by the U.S. government and that they form alliances with other villagers against Plains nomads. Lewis's plan was to knit the villagers into the American trade network and weaken the powerful horse-borne tribes, forcing the latter into cooperation with Washington. D.C. Trade and U.S. sovereignty in Louisiana went hand in hand.¹⁵

Jefferson echoed these ideas when a Mandan chief, Sheheke, visited Washington, D.C. in December 1806. "The French, the English, the Spaniards," the president said, have "retire[d] from all the country which you and we hold.... Never to return again." He promised that the Americans would build numerous trading posts and that merchants would bring many goods to the upper Missouri River. "Your numbers will be increased instead of diminishing," the president said, "and you will live in plenty." To Sheheke, who had lived through the smallpox deaths of the 1780s and now led a people who thrived on trade, such promises might have

¹³ Ronda, "Exploring the Explorers," 86.

¹⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ James P. Ronda, "Chapter 4, The Mandan Winter," in *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), accessed April 15, 2016, http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=lc.ronda.01.04.xml&_xslsrc=LC.

sounded appealing, but he cannot have been comfortable with U.S. sovereignty. Restricting business partners spelled doom for a people who depended on trade to bring resources from afar and support a mostly sedentary way of life.¹⁶ Trading with rival partners worked to the advantage of the villagers. For example, a Hudson's Bay Company official complained in 1809 that American traders had lured the best furs from native trappers, who then coerced Hudson's Bay Company traders into accepting inferior pelts.¹⁷ Instead of savvy negotiators with leverage, however, Jefferson envisioned upper Missouri tribes as cooperative citizens, farming dutifully like his beloved Virginia yeomanry whom he called a "chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people."¹⁸ They would also trade, but only with Americans, and thus provide the United States exclusive access to the furs and other resources of the Northern Plains. Trade would convert the Plains' bounty into commodities and thus capital, enriching Americans and establishing the United States as sovereign in the Louisiana Purchase. An agrarian republic would extend beyond the Missouri River.

Jefferson's vision of Mandan dependence and American sovereignty would happen, but it faced initial setbacks. In 1808, William Clark and a consortium of traders formed the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company.¹⁹ The same year, John Jacob Astor chartered the American Fur Company in New York.²⁰ In 1809, Clark's partner Manuel Lisa escorted Sheheke home to the Mandan villages and established a trading post there. The War of 1812 dampened the fur trade and Lisa abandoned the post in August 1812. In 1813, he abandoned another post on the Missouri River south of the modern North Dakota state line. American ambitions briefly revived at the end of the decade with plans for a string of military forts along the Missouri River, but never materialized. British activity in the area never revived after the war. The last recorded Canadian visit to the Knife River villages occurred in 1818.²¹ That year, the two nations temporarily gave up the goal of sovereignty and agreed on joint control of the Oregon country, encompassing the mountains and rivers west of the Plains all the way to the Pacific Coast. As late as the early 1820s, the upper Missouri villagers were effectively still fully independent peoples. As American fur companies resumed building forts, they invariably located the posts close to historic native trade centers, indicating their dependence on American Indians for acquisition of furs and markets for manufactured goods. All forts and all whites in the upper Missouri country depended on villagers' corn for sustenance. Villages stored goods and furs for traders, and provided places to lodge on the long upstream journey.²²

The mid-1820s saw the first sustained efforts by the United States to establish Americans on the Northern Plains. Numerous forts were built and gradually became more self-sufficient, importing supplies, stocking storehouses, building stockades, and trading directly with upstream tribes and undercutting the village tribes' role as middlemen. The companies began hiring more of their own Euro-American trappers to collect furs and eliminate American Indians from the

¹⁶ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 253-255.

¹⁷ Wood and Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 32.

¹⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia, PA: Prichard & Hall, 1788), 175, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/login?url=http://opac.newsbank.com/select/evans/21176>.

¹⁹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 258.

²⁰ David J. Wishart, *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 410.

²¹ Wood and Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, xvi, 31, 34; Fenn, *Encounters*, 264.

²² Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 231-232, 279-280, 283.

business altogether. In addition, the center of the fur trade was shifting west to the streams issuing from the Rocky Mountains, where the take in pelts surpassed that of the trapped-out rivers of the Plains.²³ These traders, the first of the famed mountain men, began to hopscotch from post to post up the river to reach the animals directly, rather than trading goods to acquire skins that American Indians had captured. Traders came downstream in the spring, disposed of their pelts at the forts, and purchased supplies for another season.

Starting in the early 1830s, steamboats began to chug up the Missouri River, carrying tools, food, and other resources to supply the fur trade and hauling away furs for sale in eastern and overseas markets. Increasingly, whites were established on their own and no longer depended on American Indians for survival. For sustenance, whites hunted and, more importantly, drew from huge supply areas that spanned the continent and imported what else they needed to survive and profit on the Missouri River. They used the imports to extract the watershed's resources, selling those resources in national and international markets, and acquiring labor, capital, energy, and technology to expand extraction in the West. As Jefferson had promised Sheheke, the peoples of the upper Missouri River were becoming part of an American trade system, but they were increasingly marginal to it, even though they needed it badly. One bill of goods traded to the Mandans in 1828 included cloth, cotton goods, two dozen printed calico shirts, ticking for mosquito nets, 100 pounds of powder, 200 pounds of lead, 400 pounds of iron, one pound of borax for soldering, a chest of guns, one barrel of sugar, one sack of coffee, one barrel of salt, two cases of wine, and garden seeds. American Indians had grown used to such items the fur trade had brought them and could not easily survive without them.²⁴ Moreover, the intertribal trade was on the decline.²⁵

Along with the forts came the army. In 1823, the U.S. military drove the Arikaras from their homes. In 1825, nearly five hundred well-armed troops, calculated to intimidate, arrived at the Knife River villages to negotiate a treaty. The ensuing agreement called for peace and submission. The Mandans acknowledged the "supremacy" and "protection" of the United States and agreed to subject themselves to U.S. law. They promised not to trade with the British, with American Indians hostile to the United States, or with Euro-Americans who lacked U.S.-issued trade licenses. The United States signed similar treaties with other tribes that summer. The peoples had not yet ceded any lands, but they had sacrificed some of their autonomy. Meanwhile, thousands of miles away, industrialization, something the Plains peoples could barely comprehend but which went hand-in-hand with commercialization, was changing life on the Plains. Men in Europe began to prefer silk hats, the symbol of the new industrial age, to the increasingly old-fashioned beaver felt hats. Between 1825 and 1843, the price of beaver pelts dropped by two-thirds. Meanwhile, bison hides, whose leather was used for belts in machinery, became the new staple of the fur trade.²⁶ Now exposed to silk hats, steamboats, and armies, the

²³ Roy W. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 83-84; Fenn, *Encounters*, 279, 283, 286; David J. Wishart, "An Overview of the Western Fur Trade," in *Lewis & Clark and the Indian Country: The Native American Perspective*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie and Jay T. Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 201.

²⁴ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 82-83.

²⁵ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 288-289.

²⁶ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 282-285, 287.

world of the upper Missouri River was getting bigger, and by the second half of the 1820s, its constraints on natives were beginning to show.

American and native visions for acquiring resources could not easily coexist ecologically. When they conflicted, the natives' succumbed, and between 1825 and 1837, the environmental underpinnings of the upper Missouri villagers' methods for meeting their needs collapsed. Viruses, steamboats, and rats were the chief culprits, and violence intensified the effects of each. Village populations had never fully recovered from the smallpox epidemics of the 1780s. Whooping cough struck in 1806, 1813-1814, and 1818-1819, and measles in 1819. The early 1830s brought cholera. Steamboats carrying infected passengers exposed the villagers to more Euro-Americans and new diseases, but they brought other problems as well.

For generations, the horticulturalists of the upper Missouri had minimized hunger and virtually eliminated famine through their great stores of corn, which they could consume in lean times or trade for other foodstuffs in times of surplus. Corn stores enabled the Mandans and other farmers to ride out hard winters or poor harvests. Steamboats, however, brought rats. No other rodent pest on the Plains had ever consumed so voraciously or multiplied so rapidly and soon many Mandan storehouses were empty. The villagers were hard pressed to grow enough to feed themselves and the rats.²⁷

Steamboats also brought woodcutters. Ironically, for several decades, depopulation from disease had temporarily eased the pressure the villagers had historically put on cottonwoods and other species of bottomlands of the otherwise treeless Plains. However, feeding the steamboats' insatiable demand for fuel wood renewed and drastically extended that problem. The trading posts also competed with the villagers for wood for making and heating buildings and running blacksmith operations. By the middle of the 1830s, people had nearly eradicated the Missouri River's riparian forests, leaving shortages of wood for heat, construction, tools, and cooking. Sometimes the Mandans even burned the pickets from the village stockades.²⁸ Villagers had to travel ever farther from their homes to find wood at a time when travel posed ever-greater risks.

Mounted nomads such as the Assiniboinés, Lakotas, and Yanktons had not suffered from disease or declining corn stores as much as the villagers. As their power increased, their raiding for trade goods, corn, and other items continued apace. In this context, bison, which had already largely quit the river bottoms because of the deforestation, became nearly inaccessible to the settled tribes. The Mandans had always preferred to stay put rather than follow the herds. They traded their corn for bison products with others less sedentary than themselves. However, the nomads preyed upon hunters if they went out in small numbers and attacked undefended villages if residents went out in large numbers. Sometimes they lured warriors from the village with bison decoys and then descended upon the unsuspecting hunters. Bison were still abundant in the buffer zone controlled by no one along the Little Missouri River, but nomad predation made the sixty miles between the villages and that preserve impossibly dangerous.²⁹ Now they had no corn

²⁷ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 280, 290-292.

²⁸ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 298-299, 312-313; Wishart, "Overview of the Western Fur Trade," 202.

²⁹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 306-313; Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 85-86.

surplus to trade, and were unable to leave the safety of the villages for the chase. The horticulturalists of the upper Missouri River were hemmed in and increasingly hungry. As historian Elizabeth Fenn summed up their dilemma, “Their corn was too meager, the Sioux were too close, and the bison were too far away.”³⁰

It all culminated in the hard winter of 1836-1837. “American Indians all starveing,” wrote the factor at Fort Clarke in December 1836.³¹ Corn bins were empty and bison, finding no winter shelter in the denuded riparian lands, mostly stayed away all winter. The bison float failed that spring, with no frozen carcasses or animals that had died upstream during the winter bobbing along in the spring freshets. In April, two thousand Arikaras, set on the move by pressure from the nomads, sought refuge at the Knife River villages. As historian Elizabeth Fenn observed, the refugees added numbers to shore up defenses but also meant more mouths to feed. That summer, a steamboat brought the discouraging news that annuities promised by the U.S. government would not arrive.³² The news would have been a trivial annoyance in past years, but this time, the Mandans needed those provisions. They could count on neither their old ways of subsistence nor the generosity of their fathers in Washington, D.C.



Depressions left by lodges at Awatixa Village, Knife River Villages National Historic Site. Awatixa Hidatas settled here after the small pox epidemic of the 1780s and occupied the site until it was burned by raiding Lakotas in 1834.

Photo by NPS.³³

³⁰ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 313.

³¹ Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 312-313.

³² Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 313-314, 316-317.

³³ Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site website, <https://www.nps.gov/knri/learn/historyculture/awatixa-village.htm> (accessed May 26, 2016).

Viruses, steamboats, and rats came to the upper Missouri as byproducts of Euro-Americans' success in establishing themselves. By the 1830s, fur trade companies were draining resources down the rivers into markets, converting them from organisms to commodities to capital. The essential tasks of hunting, trapping, housing, feeding, and providing security that Plains peoples had previously provided were now carried out almost exclusively by the traders themselves. This transformed both land and people in the upper Missouri River watershed. The villagers had sustained themselves as middlemen in one of the continent's most lucrative trade centers. They had counted on corn, bottomlands that provided winter shelter to bison, summer hunting forays, and bison carcasses bobbing on the spring freshets. Since the mid-eighteenth century, white traders had supplemented this already ample subsistence, bringing useful goods and exchanging them for pelts and the necessities for surviving on the Plains. Gradually after the 1780s and accelerating in the 1820s and 1830s, these methods of environmental sustenance declined or collapsed. Commodification and mixed resource harvesting had coexisted for a little while, but in the end, the Plains environment was not bountiful enough to support both economies. Steamboats and forts meant rats, deforestation, cholera, whooping cough, limited access to bison, and decline of beaver and bison populations in the bottomlands. The very processes that enabled the newcomers to function independently on the Northern Plains also changed the ecology and drove the villagers and others into dependence. Well-nourished, socially intact peoples might have been better able to endure what came next. However, the steamboat that carried the news about the annuities in July of 1837 also brought something far worse.

Disaster

The captain of the steamboat *St. Peter's* knew that his vessel carried smallpox. On the upstream voyage from St. Louis, several passengers took ill and then recovered, passing the disease from person to person. Nevertheless, the boat carried ticketed passengers and valuable cargo, and the imperatives of commerce impelled the captain forward. When the *St. Peter's* moored near the Knife River villages, some of the passengers stepping ashore might still have had infectious pustules. Perhaps a scab had fallen onto a blanket, item of clothing, or some other part of the cargo off loaded and bound for Fort Clarke or the Mandan villages. Whatever the vector, the villagers took ill. The first recorded death was on July 14, and there were many more to come. Assessing the exact numbers for deaths between July 1837 and January 1838 is complicated by uncertainty of pre-epidemic population numbers. The factor at Fort Clarke estimated that seven-eighths of the Mandan population and one-half of the Hidatsas died. Another observer said it killed all but 120-130 Mandans. The Pawnees, Arikaras, Assiniboines, Plains Crees, Piegans, Bloods, Atsinas, and Blackfoot were also hit that summer. Estimates of the total death toll on the Northern Plains range from 10,000 to more than 17,000 people.³⁴

³⁴ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 91, 96-97; Fenn, *Encounters at the End of the World*, 317-318, 322; W. Raymond Wood and Lee Irwin, "Mandan," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, Vol. 13, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 352; David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 46, 77-78, 99.

Without adequate numbers to feed, clothe, shelter, or defend themselves, the village tribes would have a hard time living as independent peoples.

Nationalization and the Rise of the State

In the aftermath of disaster, the villagers moved upstream. The smallpox survivors among the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras built Like a Fishhook Village in 1845 about halfway between the mouths of the Little Missouri and the Knife Rivers, roughly sixty-five miles east of modern Theodore Roosevelt National Park's North Unit and now submerged under Lake Sakakawea. The village constituted an attempt to recreate the village life of farming and trade that these people, soon to be called the Three Affiliated Tribes, had historically practiced.³⁵ Hidatsa tradition says the move was a response to declining timber resources.³⁶ Simultaneously, a private fur trade post, Fort Berthold, originally called Fort James, was established adjacent to the village. It is not clear whether the traders followed the tribes or vice versa, but the historic symbiosis continued. Either way the old problems of the 1830s—siege by the nomads, disease, and environmental decline—still dogged the natives.³⁷ On top of this, the fur trade was ending, just as the villagers needed it more than ever. The tribes also faced a new problem from the big world: an activist national state that by the second half of the nineteenth century had the ability to project its power and impose its will beyond the Missouri River.

Although the results would not be evident for some time, the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty was a harbinger of how the American state would make a full re-creation of village life impossible. On September 17, 1851, federal negotiators signed the pact with representatives of the Arapaho, Arikaras, Assiniboines, Cheyennes, Crows, Hidatsas, Mandans, Lakotas, and Dakotas. The tribes agreed to refrain from violence against each other and against westering Americans. They also acknowledged the U.S. government's right to establish roads and forts on the Plains. In return, the United States promised fifty years of annuities at \$50,000 divided among the tribes. (The Senate later modified this without tribal consent to fifteen years at \$70,000). Ostensibly, the purpose of the treaty was to protect overland travel and establish peace on the Plains—neither of which happened.³⁸

However, the treaty did initiate subtler but bigger changes to empower the state and undermine tribal independence. Among other things, it assigned specific territories to each tribe. From the natives' perspectives, this made little sense. Their livelihoods required movement across boundaries and flexible territorial borders to access the resources they needed. In fact, they ignored this provision of the treaty, and probably never fully understood it in the first place, at least not in the way the American negotiators did. In addition, the boundaries did not always correspond to on-the-ground realities. The lands designated for the Three Affiliated Tribes, for example, included the Little Missouri Badlands, which all of the tribes had historically used, but

³⁵ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 82.

³⁶ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 100-101; Wishart, "Overview of the Western Fur Trade," 203.

³⁷ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 100-101, 104-105.

³⁸ Howard Roberts Lamar, *The New Encyclopedia of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 385.

did not include Like a Fishhook, where the villagers currently lived. From the vantage point of Washington, D.C. however, connecting particular people with bounded spaces was essential. Tribes moving across national, state, and territorial boundaries, negotiating with different government representatives, and coming together in large bands and then disbursing constituted an administrative nightmare. People tied to one place, however, and bound to one law under leadership of specifically designated chiefs, were responsible to specific government officials who could then manage the people remotely from Washington, D.C. Under such administrative arrangements, the government could negotiate subsequent land claims with individual tribes instead of having to gain consent from many. It could hold tribes accountable for individuals' behavior within given jurisdictions. The government could use the delivery or withholding of annuities as carrots or sticks to target specific tribes that did not cooperate. By parceling the tribes into geographic jurisdictions, the government thus could deal with them individually and hold them accountable. For the time being distance, difficulty of travel, and the all-consuming sectional crisis over slavery prevented Washington from fully imposing this vision that linked people to fixed spaces on the tribes, but the Fort Laramie Treaty heralded a revolution in how Plains peoples would interact with the government in the future.³⁹

The U.S. Civil War dramatically expanded the national state and its military might, eventually empowering Washington, D.C. to carry out the vision expressed in the 1851 treaty. Financially, geographically, demographically, and logistically, the war was the largest single event in the history of the United States up to that time. To prosecute the war, the Union had to clothe, feed, transport, and supply hundreds of thousands of soldiers and deploy them from the Atlantic Tidewater to the Mississippi River and even beyond. The resulting administrative structures created some of the first mass production and distribution of clothing, food, and other goods, and accelerated the nation's industrialization, with the federal government now driving much of this expanded production. Moreover, with the South temporarily out of Congress, the advocates of centralized power enacted many laws that sectional squabbles had stymied for years. Among these were measures that established a uniform national banking system, strengthened the national currency, promoted higher education, and—most significantly for the tribes of the upper Missouri River—subsidized transcontinental railroads. In 1864, Congress chartered the Northern Pacific Railroad, which would eventually cross North Dakota and Montana.

Moreover, the war sparked turmoil on the Northern Plains. As the Confederacy tried to woo British support, the possibility of attacks from British Canada, potentially in cooperation with the Dakotas, alarmed Union leaders. Canadian traders, rumored to harbor Southern sympathies, might eagerly join such schemes. To heighten tensions, in 1862, the Santee killed several hundred white settlers in Minnesota and then fled to the Great Plains. All this led the Union to militarize Fort Berthold.⁴⁰ The United States had broken apart in 1861 as a weak and sharply divided country, but the nation-state that emerged whole after 1865 wielded far-reaching financial and transportation authority and had expanded its military presence on the Northern Plains.

³⁹ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 101, 103; Raymond J. DeMallie, "Teton," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, Vol. 13, Part 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 795.

⁴⁰ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 115-116.

The 1862 hostilities that broke out in Minnesota spread to the Dakota Territory and all the way to the Little Missouri Badlands. Among the upper Missouri River tribes, the Lakotas and Nakotas felt the consequences first. In March 1864, Brigadier General Alfred Sully chartered fifteen steamboats in St. Louis and ascended the Missouri River. By July 3, Sully's more than 3,200 men had marched to the mouth of the Cannonball River in modern North Dakota, where they rendezvoused with the steamers, which brought additional infantry along with guns, ammunition, food, and other provisions. The troops erected a storehouse for the supplies and a post, which they called Fort Rice. Several decades in the making, Americans' growing ability to import what they needed to survive on the Plains and to use it to operate independently now took military form. From Fort Rice, Sully marched northwest, with mules and wagons fully loaded. He engaged 5,000 mostly Siouan-speaking warriors, mostly Lakotas but also Dakotas, Nakotass, and others, on July 28 at the Battle of Killdeer Mountain, some twenty miles southeast of modern Theodore Roosevelt National Park's North Unit. After putting the tribes on the run, he ordered the destruction of their camp. His men burned "vast quantities of goods," including more than a ton of dried buffalo meat; buffalo skin cases; dried berries; several thousand buffalo robes; tanned buffalo, elk, and antelope skins; household utensils; brass and copper kettles; mess pans; and the poles of some fifteen hundred lodges.⁴¹

On August 5, the Little Missouri Badlands came in sight. Sully marveled at the "cones and oven-shaped knolls of all sizes, from twenty feet to several hundred feet high, sometimes by themselves, sometimes piled up into large heaps on top of one another, in all conceivable shapes and confusion." It was "grand dismal and majestic...a most wonderful and interesting country." He wished for a cadre of geologists to make sense of it all.⁴² More immediately, though, he had to figure out how to cross this haunting landscape with dwindling supplies. Crawling forward, sometimes literally digging a path before them, the Americans advanced toward the river, where the warriors descended upon them on August 8. "I now knew I had come upon the Indians...in the worst possible section of the country," Sully later reported.⁴³ This was no accident, his enemies having undoubtedly chosen for the engagement this difficult spot, which they knew well and Sully not at all. Slogging forward, fighting every step of the way, the army eventually emerged victorious near modern Medora, North Dakota, in a two-day skirmish known as the Battle of the Badlands. Crossing the Little Missouri River, the expedition found a near-barren landscape. Grasshoppers had eaten every green thing all the way to the Yellowstone River. The force reached the Yellowstone on August 12, with half-starved animals and men on severely reduced rations. There the steamboats *Chippewa Falls* and *Alone* relieved them with fresh provisions, though a third craft, carrying the bulk of the corn Sully had requisitioned, had stuck on a snag downstream and been unable to ascend the rest of the way. This misfortune prevented Sully from pursuing the bands further. Satisfied with having killed many warriors and dealt a blow to the tribes' supply base, Sully returned downstream, depositing troops and provisions at strategic locations along the way, including at Fort Berthold, to establish the nation state's ongoing military presence on the upper Missouri River.

⁴¹ George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, by George W. Kingsbury; *South Dakota: Its History and Its People*, edited by George Martin Smith, vol. 1 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1915), 353-355; U.S. Department of War, "Report of Alfred Sully," in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series 1, Vol. 41, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893), 358.

⁴² U.S. Department of War, "Report of Alfred Sully," 359.

⁴³ U.S. Department of War, "Report of Alfred Sully," 359.



Theodore Roosevelt National Park terrain resembles that which confounded Sully. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

Had steamboats not provisioned him at the outset and conclusion of his campaign, Sully's troops would have been severely undersupplied in engaging the warriors and could easily have perished in the denuded plains around the Yellowstone River. That he not only obtained these provisions but also successfully inflicted considerable losses in deaths and resources on the bands indicates the degree to which the United States was now able to draw resources from afar to field troops at great distances from its economic centers. Sully was not able to accomplish all his objectives, but he was a far cry from the early-century traders who had to rent lodging from hosts and pay high prices for the food and horses that enabled traders to stay alive and travel on the Plains at all.

Sully's campaign yielded comparative peace between the army and the Lakotas and Nakotas in Dakota Territory for the next decade. However, before the Civil War was over, a few Americans and European immigrants began settling the land east of the Missouri River, and it was only a matter of time before the competition for land and access to resources that had sparked conflict in the early 1860s reignited. The first reservations for the Lakotas and Nakotas were established in the 1860s and 1870s, but the 1874 discovery of gold in the Black Hills brought a tide of settlers into this sacred and ecologically essential space. Fighting between warriors and soldiers erupted. In 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his troops camped three miles south of Medora in route to the infamous Battle of Little Bighorn. Despite the Plains peoples' triumph in that clash, by 1877 continued warfare broke the last of the military challenge that the Lakotas, Nakotas, and other horse-borne tribes posed to the United States.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ DeMallie, "Teton," 797-799; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "The U.S. Army and the Sioux, Part 4," accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/historyculture/the-us-army-and-the-sioux-part-4.htm>.

Military force, however, was only the first step in subjecting the nomads to the government's authority. Reflecting their modicum of continued independence, large numbers of Lakotas and Nakotas strayed from the reservations to follow bison over the ensuing years, the agencies being unable to supply enough food and other items to support reservation residents. They and other Plains nomads gathered in Montana's Milk River Basin in the late 1870s, one of the last remaining locales with large bison herds.⁴⁵ By the 1880s, however, even this refuge was emptied of the beasts. As their main resource for food, tools, and other essentials dwindled, the Lakotas and Nakotas had little choice but to remain on the reservation.

The tale of submission was also told in housing. In 1871, all the Nakotas and Lakotas on the Crow Creek Reservation—then called the Upper Missouri Agency—still lived in tepees, structures that facilitated their mobile lives. By 1874, however, there were 100 houses built, and forty more the following year. Soon, almost all residents lived in cottonwood log cabins with manufactured doors and windows.⁴⁶ Such structures befitted a sedentary people, who relied not on mobility to access resources but on being part of a national commercial system in which window panes, nails, and other resources moved to them—but never quite enough.



Although wiped out in the Little Missouri Badlands by the 1880s, bison have been reintroduced to the park and today roam its grasslands. Photo by Maren Bzdek.

⁴⁵ Raymond J. DeMallie, "Yankton and Yanktonai," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. by William C. Sturtevant, Vol. 13, Part 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 788.

⁴⁶ DeMallie, "Yankton and Yanktonai," 781.

Meanwhile, the immediate consequence of the Civil War for the Three Affiliated Tribes at Like a Fishhook was the militarization of Fort Berthold. The troops Sully deposited on his way back downstream stayed and made the site an official U.S. military post until 1867. The fur trade had ended, adding to the hard times the villagers suffered, but the army's presence compensated by dramatically reducing the attacks by mounted nomads. Defense and security were now additional services for which the villagers depended on the government. The biggest shift, however, came at the end of the 1860s, when the newly empowered post-Civil War state reached more deeply into the lives of the villagers, in ways similar to what it was doing to the nomads.

Hard times had persisted for the villagers ever since the smallpox epidemics in the 1830s. In 1839, Siouan-speaking warriors had attacked and burned one of the Knife River villages that was already reeling from depopulation due to the epidemic. After the move to Like a Fishhook, the attacks continued unabated through the 1840s and 1850s. Cholera and other diseases brought by overland migrants and steamboats also ravaged the residents, and smallpox struck again in 1856. By the end of the 1850s, the villagers were dependent for their subsistence on government annuities. Grasshoppers, droughts, and frosts aggravated their miseries.⁴⁷ Crop and hunt failures in the 1860s led at times to daily food rations from the government, and the nomads' predations resumed after Fort Berthold was demilitarized in 1867. The nomads terrorized hunting and wood-gathering parties that strayed from the village and on at least one occasion deliberately scared game away from the village.⁴⁸

Continued deforestation pushed the villagers over the tipping point. In 1869, tribal leaders complained to army officers that white woodcutters selling to steamboats were using up the dwindling timber supplies near Like a Fishhook. The officers reported the grievance to Washington, D.C., but officials said that because the three tribes had no reservation, the government had no authority to restrict whites' access to woodlands. The government could not take notice of a resource problem without lines on a map designating who had access to them. However, if the tribes would consent to a bordered reservation, perhaps the government could do something. The Three Affiliated Tribes readily assented, and their first reservation was established on April 12, 1870. It included most though not all of the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty lands, the first of many cessions that reduced tribal holdings over the next two decades. Reservations put American Indians in boxes that the state could understand and track and enabled the state to require everyone to behave as if those categories were real. American Indians on the reservation could receive annuities, protection, exclusive access to woodlands, and other assistance. American Indians off the reservation, living autonomously and potentially uncooperative, could be denied the fruits of agreements. Increasingly, Plains peoples depended on the reservation in order to eat. However, the reservation kept shrinking. The government reduced the size in 1880 by executive order without consulting the tribes. The tribes ceded another chunk in 1886, by which point they held only 10 percent of their initial reserve of over twelve million acres.⁴⁹ Jefferson's vision had almost come true—Indians tied to fixed spaces would be part of the American commercial system.

⁴⁷ Frank Henderson Stewart, "Hidatsa," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, Vol. 13, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 331; Meyer, *Village Indians*, 105-107.

⁴⁸ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 119-120.

⁴⁹ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 111-114.

The price, however, was that the fixed spaces and jurisdictions curtailed American Indians' independence. They could no longer come and go from the reservation as they pleased. Timber supplies continued to dwindle, and the government encouraged the tribes to disburse from the village onto small individual family plots. To promote this, and to remake the people into the yeoman of Jefferson's imagination, the reservation agent Abram J. Gifford experimented by granting fifteen or sixteen Arikara families plots on the reservation in 1884. A hundred more soon followed. A favorable season in 1885 rewarded them. Meanwhile, Gifford burned the lodges they left behind to dissuade them from returning to the village. The Arikara section of Like a Fishhook was deserted. Soon, so was the rest of it. Congress imposed this vision of individual American Indian property ownership on a national scale in 1887 when it passed the General Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act. Under the measure, the government would survey tribal lands and allot small tracts to individuals, who would become farmers and U.S. citizens. In 1892, surveyors began parceling the Three Affiliated Tribes' reservation into private plots. Individuals chose their own allotments, 160 acres for heads of families, eighty for other adults, and forty for children. By 1895, 949 allotments had been made. For some time, the agency also distributed annuities to families individually. Through all the changes the tribes had experienced over the centuries, the one constant had been the village. Now, most reservation residence lived in log cabins on family plots. They ate bacon instead of bison, more wheat flour and less corn meal.⁵⁰ The members of the Three Affiliated Tribes had property, a piece of the American Dream. It was, however, too small a piece to support an independent life.

Conclusion

Eventually, even the Crow Flies High Band, which had rejected the reservation when it was created in 1870, lost its independence. Like all other Plains peoples in the late nineteenth century, their ecological base was eroding around them. The game that supported them was disappearing. They sold their cabins for firewood. They clashed with the Marquis de Mores and other white ranchers who wanted to raise cattle in the Little Missouri Badlands. In 1893, the band was reduced to asking the government for rations, and on April 4, 1894, all 150 members of the band arrived at Fort Berthold to settle onto individual plots, although in a last measure of defiance of the grid, they refused to live near the agency headquarters.⁵¹ However, they lacked the skills, capital, and equipment to farm profitably and did not have the legal experience and influence to protect their lands from white encroachment.

Whether farmers or horse people, the American Indians of the Northern Plains lost their independence during the nineteenth-century because of the clash of two visions of how to live and profit in a difficult environment.⁵² The native vision was communal and relied on mobility. It proved incompatible with the white vision, which tied individual people to individual pieces of

⁵⁰ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 125, 134, 137-138.

⁵¹ Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 140-141; Stewart, "Hidatsa," 331-332.

⁵² The Northern Plains story here is part of a larger story that followed this same path throughout the West. See, for example, Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

land. Plains peoples had once cultivated a diverse ecological base, acquiring everything they needed from their labor on the land. Whites specialized, extracting one resource from the land and converting it to a commodity to sell in order to acquire the fruits of other people's labor. Plains peoples captured resources from pools that had multiple owners. Whites granted exclusive access to resources—called property—to sovereign owners.

As late as the 1820s, the two visions co-existed on roughly equal footing because whites could not profit or even survive in the West without American Indian support. However, the fur trade, forts, storehouses, steamboats, armies, railroads, and mass production made the world bigger. They connected the upper Missouri River to fashion whims, hungry rodents, viruses, military rivals, and alluring products that previously had found the Northern Plains largely inaccessible. The connections of the big world favored the commercialized vision, enabling whites to draw from a larger ecological space to support themselves on the upper Missouri. They could produce what they needed for Plains profit and survival far from the Plains, transport it in, store it, guard it, and move it around with aplomb. By the end of the century, the considerable ecological independence they had achieved enabled them to impose their vision of living and profiting on the land and people in the upper Missouri country.

Theodore Roosevelt came to the Little Missouri River in 1883. He was looking for bison for sport, not sustenance. That there existed a population of people like him—who were sufficiently freed from having to labor daily to meet their resource needs so that they could come West to play in the very places where American Indians went hungry for want of resources—is in itself an indication of the enormous ecological triumph of the white vision. That Roosevelt had trouble finding any bison in an area that had once abounded in them is an indication of how degraded the Plains environment had already become. Yet many newcomers saw great potential in the Badlands. Cattle were replacing bison. A slaughterhouse would soon sit on the banks of the Little Missouri River, and it would turn animals into meat, refrigerate them, and ship them east to find their way to far away dinner tables. Manufactured goods sold via mail order catalogs would ride the rails west to supply the locals' needs that could not be met by raising cattle, farming, mining, or railroad building.⁵³ In some ways, this was not new. For more than ten thousand years, the Little Missouri River had supplied resources to people regionally and knit them into larger trade networks. No one, however, had ever tried to settle there. In the last third of the nineteenth century, a cohort of people who shared the commercialized visions of the traders, soldiers, reservation agents, and sport hunters would try.

⁵³ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 1991).

Chapter 3 “Pioneers of Civilization”: Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands

Mark Boxell

Theodore Roosevelt gravitated toward the West and specifically the Badlands of Dakota Territory because of pristine nature’s mystique and the belief that the struggle to wrest “civilization” from wilderness laid the foundations of democratic society. “Out on the frontier, and generally among those who spend their lives in, or on the borders of, the wilderness,” Roosevelt wrote after his time in the Dakotas, “life is reduced to its elemental conditions. The passions and emotions of these grim hunters of the mountains and these wild rough-riders of the plains are simpler and stronger than those of people dwelling in more complicated states of society.”¹ Roosevelt believed that the frontier’s harsh materiality molded civil society, and that the cowboys and ranch-hands who called the West home embodied the masculine virtues that lay at the core of American democracy. Years before the term came to signify his Progressive Party Roosevelt described his ranch-hands, Bill Sewall and Wilmot Dow, as “bull moose.”² He believed “it is the men who guard and follow the horned herds that prepare the way for the settlers who come after.”³ The Badlands’ natural environment—its prairie grasses which made the cattle industry possible, its rising buttes and deep coulees that provided many challenges to hunters, its brutal winters and scorching summers that defined its continental climate—provided tests that would make the country stronger. The preservation of that environment can help convey to visitors of Theodore Roosevelt National Park the material realities that Roosevelt faced during his formative years in the Badlands.

The idealized, near mythical Badlands residing within Roosevelt’s rhetoric were only part of the story. Roosevelt first traveled to the region in 1883 as a hunter in search of bison, but stayed as an investor in the growing open range cattle industry. If the lure of bison hunting illustrates Roosevelt’s romantic, adventurous notions of the late nineteenth-century West, then the time and capital he invested in ranching reveal the region’s pragmatic realities. Diverse investors and global economic demands redefined the region and pushed the Badlands into a larger world, inaugurating a process of rapid social and ecological change. Young Roosevelt did not explicitly confront the tensions between these two visions of the Badlands landscape during his time in the region, but the capitalistic exploitation he witnessed there left indelible marks on many people and shaped the conservation ethic Roosevelt developed during his subsequent political career.

Roosevelt formed his vision of a mythical, Wild West from childhood onward. The Badlands represented for him a world he had imagined since a young age. His early forays into zoology, natural history, and western adventure literature shaped his thinking about the western

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “In Cowboy-Land,” *Century Magazine* (June 1893): 276, Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treditorials/c21.pdf>.

² Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (New York: Century, 1888; unabridged Dover edition, Mineola, NY: Dover, 2009), 161.

³ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life*, 12.

frontier. Big-game hunting and the physical labor required of those living on the edge of “civilization” acted to romanticize these frontiers. Roosevelt’s arrival in the Badlands exemplified a shift in how both Americans and Europeans had begun to conceptualize the region, especially those—including Roosevelt—who had capital to spare and profits on their minds. Hunting remained important to Roosevelt throughout his ranching years (1883-1887). However, cattle became his principal venture. Committing a reported \$80,000 to his herds, he established two ranches, the Maltese Cross and Elkhorn, both of which are now commemorated as part of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Up to five thousand head of cattle bore Roosevelt’s Maltese Cross brand in the early 1880s.⁴ More than mere animals comprised Roosevelt’s herds and those of his contemporaries. They were lucrative, hooved commodities gathered *en masse*. They embodied the vagaries of global financial markets and left behind an important environmental legacy.



Roosevelt’s Maltese Cross Cabin. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

⁴ Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 2011), 475-476.

When Teddy Roosevelt first arrived in the Dakota Territory, a place whites named after the tribal inhabitants from whom they were taking the land, both whites and American Indians had long been exploiting the Badlands' natural resources. Yet the pace and scale of that exploitation was much smaller than what Roosevelt and his contemporaries were envisioning. The Mandans and other tribes traded goods on a continental scale, and the fur traders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century had been part of an international industry. Riparian lands were denuded and species such as beaver and bison were in decline. Consolidating technologies like the railroads had not yet boosted production and consumption as they would during the Dakotas' 1880s cattle boom. Roosevelt perhaps unwittingly carried into the Dakotas his share of a collective economic ethos rooted in technology, credit, and capitalism. Capitalists like Roosevelt considered this system of exchange to be the beating heart of the Republic.⁵ In Roosevelt's words, he liked "big things...big wheat-fields, railroads, and herds of cattle too, big factories, steamboats, and everything else."⁶ These "big things" came with Roosevelt to the Dakotas and integrated the region into a big world of profit and plenty. The Badlands became the archetypal economic Eden to moneyed ranchers like Roosevelt. Promoters viewed the Dakota Territory as a key asset to the American ranching industry, which by 1885 used over 1.3 million square miles of land in the U.S. However, the pace at which this capitalist system pumped people and cattle onto the Badlands exceeded the local ecosystem's adaptive capabilities.⁷

The ranching industry transformed the Badlands on several scales. Market-based decisions made in cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, and St. Paul often dictated the processes that turned the western Dakota region into an urban hinterland. These cities acted as nodes in a global system of tradeable commodities. Roosevelt and his fellow ranchers' cattle often entered the market at these geographical points. The Dakota open range cattle industry became part of a complex, global system of urban exchange.⁸ Ranchers integrated the Badlands into this expansive, delocalized, abstract economy. The Badlands and its organic energy was an essential facet of that distant economy, and Roosevelt and his fellow ranchers struggled to shape the region into ideal cattle country. In a commoditized landscape such as the 1880s Badlands, ranchers and cowboys destroyed wolves and coyotes, consumed large numbers of calorie-rich elk and deer, and re-engineered the grasslands to accommodate great herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. From his youthful idealization of the Badlands, to his embrace of capital-intensive ranching, to the ranching industry's subsequent effects upon western Dakota's ecosystems, Roosevelt's time in the region represents a series of conflicting visions. He often imagined the Badlands as free and mythical, but at the same time, people around the nation had begun to see the Dakota landscape in production-centered, commoditized terms. These seemingly contradictory visions of the landscape intermingled in complex ways, and Roosevelt's search for

⁵ Richard Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier," *American Quarterly* 33, no. 5 (Winter 1981): 609.

⁶ From a speech that Roosevelt gave in Dickinson, Dakota Territory, July 4, 1886, printed in the *Dickinson Free Press*, July 10, 1886, quoted in Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York City: Random House, 2010), 333.

⁷ Joseph Nimmo, Jr., *Report in Regards to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Treasury Department, 1885; reprint, New York City: Arno Press, 1972), 1; White, *Railroaded*, 474.

⁸ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, (New York City: W. W. Norton, 1991), 106-124, 222-226, 236-239. Cronon talks about this process in terms of grain and cattle.

profit and adventure in the region would help shape his subsequent conservation ethic, an ethic that accepted capitalism but decried the style of exploitation that reigned in the Badlands in the 1880s.

Idealizing the Badlands

Theodore Roosevelt first arrived in Little Missouri, Dakota Territory before dawn on September 8, 1883. He was twenty-four-years-old, recently married, bespectacled, and completely out of place among the shortgrass prairie and towering, desiccated buttes that rose from the Badlands. His aristocratic upbringing did not exactly scream “cowboy,” and his eyeglasses gave him away for a “tenderfoot.” Already a New York State Assemblyman, Roosevelt was leaving behind a cosmopolitan life and a promising, if turbulent, political career. Yet he carried with him a wealth of sportsman’s knowledge, which he had acquired through hands-on experience since childhood. Some of the information about the outdoors and about wildlife that he carried with him from New York to the Dakotas was practical and useful, some of it myth. These experiences helped to shape in Roosevelt a vision of the western frontier as the tattered edgework of a growing country that had yet to be fully sewn together. Roosevelt also envisioned the Badlands as a place of adventure. Elk, antelope, and American bison beckoned to the young hunter. The region became a mechanism through which Roosevelt hoped to capture the products of his own masculinity and hunting skill. “The nights were frosty and the days cool and pleasant,” he wrote, “and from sunrise to sunset we were off riding or walking among the low hills and over the level uplands; so that we slept well and ate well, and felt the beat of hardy life in our veins.”⁹ Roosevelt relished the physicality of the Dakotas. He was drawn to the towering summer sun and the cutting winter winds that still buffet visitors to Theodore Roosevelt National Park today.

The Dakotas provided sensory experiences that he could not find in New York City, but the whimsical and unreal also shaped Roosevelt’s conceptions of the West. Roosevelt first encountered the West through fiction. As a boy, he devoured adventure tales written by Frederick Marryat, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and James Fenimore Cooper.¹⁰ Another author Roosevelt mentioned explicitly in his autobiography was Mayne Reid, an Englishman who fought for the United States in the Mexican-American War and who refashioned his experiences in the Southwest into tall tales that celebrated the wilderness frontier’s freedom, adventure, and natural democracy. Reid’s prose resembles Roosevelt’s own descriptions of the frontier. Reid’s books were often instructional, and his prose taught Roosevelt to appreciate zoology and natural history.¹¹ Reid’s fiction also likely planted in Roosevelt more complex views of the West. Reid’s stories often included classic characters of the frontier wilderness: resourceful backwoodsmen, dangerous American Indians, genteel women in distress. “But permeating the stereotypes,” wrote critic Joan Steele, “is Reid’s political dream of democracy,

⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, “Hunting in the Cattle Country,” *Magazine of Travel Magazine* 1, no. 1 (January 1895): 71, Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treeditorials/trv1.pdf>.

¹⁰ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 16.

¹¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913; condensed from the original edition, supplemented by letters, speeches, and other writings, and edited with an introduction by Wayne Andrews, New York City: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 12-13.

which he still assigns to the American people, and his personal fantasy of the grandeur and beauty of the American land as a refuge and healer.”¹² Roosevelt would eventually describe the West in similarly idealistic terms, as a space where Americans learned the hallmarks of right living. “It was a fine, healthy life,” he wrote, referring to living in the Badlands, “it taught a man self-reliance, hardihood, and the value of instant decision. In short, the virtues that ought to come from life in the open country.”¹³ The literature Roosevelt had read as a child in part informed his tendency to seek adventure, an inclination that drew him to the Dakotas at twenty-four. The frontier represented more than a getaway. The Dakotas became a training ground for Roosevelt. He hoped wrangling cattle on the range, fording the Little Missouri River on horseback, and pursuing elusive game like antelope would be worthy challenges to his own vision of idealized masculinity.

Roosevelt’s idealization of the Dakotas and of the American West in general was not just the outgrowth of fictionalized stories and myths; there were material roots to his infatuation. Roosevelt and his Dakota contemporaries were drawn to the region’s “fencelessness.” “Here there are no fences to speak of,” Roosevelt wrote, “and all of the land north of the Black Hills and the Big Horn Mountains between the Rockies and the Dakota wheat-fields might be spoken of as one gigantic, unbroken pasture, where cowboys and branding-irons take the place of fences.”¹⁴ Others noted this material aspect of the Badlands’ ranching days. “There was no such things as fences in those days,” recalled Margaret Barr Roberts, a contemporary of Roosevelt’s. “Nobody owned land. You would have been insulted if anybody offered you a piece of land as a gift. You didn’t want a piece. You felt that you owned all there was.”¹⁵ Fences acted as markers of private property in Euro-American tradition. Whites connected a lack of fences with wildness.¹⁶ Locals celebrated the range’s vastness and openness as a communal space, and white Dakotans and eastern migrants like Roosevelt held fast to the romance that the unbounded grasslands and buttes elicited. However, this was an oversimplification of the Badlands’ political and social borders, fences or not. The rise of the ranching industry had serious implications for American Indians’ mobility, for instance. Few people “owned” the land they alighted on, but ranchers used political and social sway to coerce people off their claims. Yet “fencelessness” was still a material reality, and it gave privileged Euro-American immigrants the impression that the Badlands were free for all. This was an important facet of the idealization of the frontier, which is apparent in Roosevelt’s writings as well as in others’ recollections of the nineteenth-century Badlands. Today, Theodore Roosevelt National Park maintains this fencelessness within the interior of the park. It was a unique characteristic for a commodified landscape, which the Badlands were in the 1880s.

¹² Joan Steele, *Captain Mayne Reid* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1978), 76.

¹³ Roosevelt, *Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 60.

¹⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, “Ranch Life in the Far West,” *The Century Magazine* 35, no. 4 (February 1888): 495, Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treitorials/c18.pdf>.

¹⁵ Everett C. Albers and D. Jerome Tweton, eds., *The Way it Was: The North Dakota Frontier Experience. Book Three: The Cowboys & Ranchers* (Fessenden: The Grass Roots Press, 1999), 63.

¹⁶ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York City: Hill & Wang, 1983), 14, 130-132, 135. Cronon focuses on fences in colonial New England, which were used to divide and establish private property as they had done for centuries in Western Europe. These same traditions would eventually come to the Badlands, but were conspicuously and necessarily absent during the open range era.

Fencelessness and the settlers' celebration of an open, boundless range represent some of the aesthetic appeal that the Badlands provided in the 1880s. Roosevelt embraced these aspects of the Dakotas and wrote about them extensively and with flourish. "It was still the Wild West in those days," he recalled in his autobiography, introducing readers to his time in the Dakotas. It was "the Far West, the West of Owen Wister's stories and Frederic Remington's drawings, the West of the Indian and the buffalo-hunter, the soldier and the cow-puncher."¹⁷ Indeed, Roosevelt first traveled to the Dakotas as a bison hunter, and his attitudes concerning big game hunting perhaps best represent his wider idealization of the "Wild West." Roosevelt saw hunting as a test of his aristocratic manhood, and in his writings, he praised the democratic virtues which hunting engendered in men of his social stature. For men like Roosevelt, contended historian Richard Slotkin, hunting "was neither work nor sport, but a physical and moral discipline preparing them for leadership in public affairs."¹⁸ "Roosevelt hunted according to a strict code of personal morality," argued Roosevelt biographer Edmund Morris.¹⁹ Roosevelt detested "butchers" who killed animals for only their hides, leaving the rest to rot, and he described hunters as "the archetype of freedom," due to their self-reliance and unabridged physicality.²⁰ Hunters were not the idle, moneyed landowners who did nothing to improve the country—a type of person Roosevelt detested. Rather, in Roosevelt's eyes, hunting was an act of pragmatic physicality. It preserved moral virtue and displayed the natural order of things. Literary critic Catherine Bates contended that hunting is an activity that is "translated or converted into something...abstract and symbolic." The act is "a representation of the hunter's inherent qualities, an indication of his capability."²¹ Through hunting, active men like Roosevelt proved their station at the top of the food chain. Roosevelt would have conceptualized his bison hunt in these idealized terms as an almost sacred act that celebrated the virtues men were supposed to derive from wild places.²² The Badlands and the area that is today Theodore Roosevelt National Park became for Roosevelt a ritual ground where, through stalking and killing large prey, he proved his masculine qualities to himself and to his peers.

However, distant markets and new economic demands were changing the Badlands in the early 1880s, and these changes prolonged Roosevelt's search for "the lordly buffalo."²³ When Roosevelt first arrived in the Badlands in September of 1883, he hired local hunting guide Joe Ferris to lead him to the bison. Roosevelt hired Ferris in part because the Badlands represented unfamiliar territory. Brown, sandstone buttes, shaped over time by wind and the ever-shifting Little Missouri River, rose up from grasslands, creating a craggy, monolithic vista with few trees. An Army general named Alfred Sully aptly described the landscape as "hell with the fires out."²⁴ The only landscapes Roosevelt had seen that resembled the Badlands were the rocky desert

¹⁷ Roosevelt, *Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 58.

¹⁸ Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 631.

¹⁹ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 293.

²⁰ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 117.

²¹ Catherine Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt: From Spenser to Wyatt* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

²² Daniel Justin Herman, "Hunting Democracy," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 55, no. 3 (August 2005): 24, 26-27, 29.

²³ Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New York City: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1885), 241.

²⁴ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 198.

grasslands of the Middle East, which he had visited as a boy. Roosevelt also hired Ferris because by this time bison had become conspicuously scarce on the Plains. Euro-Americans had turned the Plains into a bison graveyard. As resident Charlie Colgrove recalled, the Badlands had been “a damn good country for buffalo, and hides bought a fat price, I believe \$2.00 per. Them buffalo bones laid all over this here country. Holy God! There was tons of them. I just picked big bones and left the little ones for the Russian kids in the country. I got \$10.00 a load.”²⁵ Others travelling in the West in the 1870s and 1880s noticed the desolation. Across the Plains, westward travelers came across the rotting carcasses of American bison. Contract hunters only desired tongues and hides, leaving the bulk of the animal behind.²⁶ Roosevelt himself noted the “countless numbers” of bleached bison skulls that littered the Dakota Territory. The rising number of ranches constrained the amount of land where the bison could graze in the Badlands region, and drought and fire in areas around the Badlands drove bison herds towards the populated Missouri River Valley.²⁷ “The extermination of the buffalo has been a veritable tragedy of the animal world,” Roosevelt lamented.²⁸ Yet his hunt went on. Ferris and Roosevelt spent a week in the Badlands searching for their prize, jostled by unruly horses and mud-caked due to autumn rains that liquefied the dust. The struggle exhilarated Roosevelt, who was in his idealized Wild West—wet, cold, tired, constantly reminding himself that success would come only if he “keeps doggedly on in his course.”²⁹ The ritualized high that hunting provided coursed through him. Yet the bison were largely gone, a fact accentuated by the length of the trip. Roosevelt had arrived near the end of the transition to a post-bison Badlands.

A Scotsman named Gregor Lang personified the post-bison transition. On the surface, Lang appeared to be a loner who had sought refuge from urban life in the backwoods along a Little Missouri River tributary called Cannonball Creek. He lived in a small cabin with his son, and agreed to house Roosevelt and Ferris in the midst of their hunt. Roosevelt soon found that Lang represented a new iteration of the commodified West, one that sought to replace bison with another hooved moneymaker. A British financier who desired to enter the open range cattle business had sent Lang to the Dakotas. Lang was shrewd and articulate, and Roosevelt warmed to him quickly. They talked about literature, politics, and geology. Eventually, the conversation turned to ranching. “I am thinking seriously of going into the cattle business,” Roosevelt admitted to Lang one night, asking the Scot for his opinion on whether he should enter the industry. Lang was reserved, refusing to give Roosevelt a straight answer to the question. “As a business proposition, it is the best there is,” was as far as Lang would go.³⁰

In the midst of his ritualistic hunt for a creature on the brink of extinction, Roosevelt conjured up visions of a rationalized, commodified West. He eventually bagged his bison with Ferris’s help. Yet in the process, a new West had emerged in Roosevelt’s eyes. Visions of the ranching West, the capital-intensive West, even the globalized West, became intermixed with the idealized wilderness that Roosevelt had always attributed to the region. At times, these visions

²⁵ Albers and Tweton, *Way it Was, Book Three*, 9.

²⁶ Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 216-217.

²⁷ Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 142.

²⁸ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 243.

²⁹ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 267.

³⁰ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 201-205.

competed with one another, and at other times, they complimented each other. In either case, with these visions Roosevelt and his contemporaries brought social and ecological change to the Badlands.

“Big Things” Come to the Badlands: Capitalism and Ranching on the Northern Plains

Roosevelt described western Dakota Territory in largely idealistic terms, as a place where he and his fellow ranchers could “feel the beat of hardy life” in their veins, but other men had less idyllic reasons for being there. Ranching pulled migrants to the Badlands in the 1880s, and newcomers considered it primarily a cold business. The editors of Medora’s *Bad Lands Cow Boy* newspaper bluntly proclaimed that they had come “to make some almighty dollars.”³¹ Railroads played a vital role in facilitating that dollar making. Texas cattlemen first envisioned the Dakotas as a cattle range when they discovered that their southern herds grew quickly when fed on the Northern Plains’ nutrient-rich prairie grasses.³² As railroads spread westward from Midwestern and Eastern termini, ranchers brought more and more cattle onto the Great Plains. By the early 1880s, the trains, and with them the herds, had reached the Dakota Territory. The cowboy lifestyle that prevailed in the Badlands and which Roosevelt celebrated so much relied on state-of-the-art technologies and capital rooted in urban centers. The federal government subsidized and capitalists financed the wide-open range and the self-reliant life that Roosevelt found in the Dakotas. “Although Americans still celebrate the West as a bastion of individualism,” wrote historian Richard White, “corporations, along with the federal government, were central to its creation.”³³ Trains, stock-growers associations, and capitalists from as far away as Western Europe came to define the Badlands as much as buttes, bison, and the Little Missouri River. The railroad that runs through Medora and Theodore Roosevelt National Park might today seem antiquated in light of the ubiquity of the park’s car-driving visitors, but it was once an essential technology to the development of the ranching industry in the Badlands.

³¹ “Introductory,” *Bad Lands Cow Boy* (Medora, Dakota Territory), February 7, 1884, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o274361>.

³² Roger L. Di Silvestro, *Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands: A Young Politician’s Quest for Recovery in the American West* (New York City: Walker, 2011), 73, 216; Norman K. Risjord, *Dakota: the Story of the Northern Plains* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 144; Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 218, 220.

³³ White, *Railroaded*, xxii.



Site of Roosevelt's beloved but no-longer-extant Elkhorn Ranch home. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

By 1882, the Northern Pacific Railroad had established stations at Little Missouri and Bismarck in Dakota Territory and at Glendive in Montana Territory, thus opening the Badlands to capital-intensive ranching. Railroads had brought environmental change to the country before. Railroads south of Dakota Territory had inaugurated the great bison extirpation. There is a good chance the bison Roosevelt killed with Ferris was taking refuge in the Badlands, away from southern killing fields. Spurred on by fashionable America's hunger for bison robes and industrial manufacturers' reliance upon leather machine belts, bison hunters flooded the Plains beginning in the 1870s, massacring the animal in the millions. Contract hunters moved northward as the 1880s approached. The Northern Pacific shipped fifty-thousand bison-skin robes in 1881, the first year of large-scale commercial hunting in the Badlands. In 1882, two hundred thousand robes traveled by rail eastward. Hunters quickly depleted the vast herds. By 1884, just four years after commercial bison hunters had entered the Badlands, traders shipped just one car-load of robes to market from Dickinson, Dakota Territory.³⁴

The extirpation of the Plains bison painted a grim picture, depicting how the era's capitalistic furor threatened the West's ecological health. Commercial hunters had sought to fill a niche in a globalized marketplace, which, through credit and railroads, produced and consumed commodities at ever-increasing rates. Businessmen paid little heed to the financial imperatives that had nearly eliminated the bison. "The very market forces that had led hunters nearly to exterminate the species now encouraged other people to find a suitable replacement so that the rich fertility of the western grasslands should not go to waste," wrote historian William Cronon.

³⁴ White, *Railroaded*, 470; Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 121-122, 130-131; Di Silvestro, *Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands*, 31.

“Even before the bison had entirely gone, their heirs apparent—horses, sheep, and especially the longhorn cattle working their way north from Texas—were already beginning to make buffalo country their own.”³⁵ Professional hunters and the railroads had eradicated the bison, and the market dictated that the ecological niche must be filled. The “beef bonanza” was the answer.

The railroads tied the Badlands to cosmopolitan, urban markets, and market integration changed daily life in the region. “Because investments and costs were enormous, everything that moved by railroad—and every place through which the railroad ran—became linked to the imperatives of corporate capital,” wrote William Cronon about the American West of the late nineteenth century. “The railroad thus became the chief device for introducing a new capitalist logic to the geography of the Great West.”³⁶ Ranching promotions and newspapers produced rhetoric revealing the excitement that this logic had brought to the Badlands. “Reports from all quarters indicated that there will be a rush of capitalists to the whole West to engage in the stock business,” the *Bad Lands Cow Boy* reported in its inaugural issue in February 1884.³⁷ This paper, which Roosevelt and his contemporaries in the Dakotas read, and whose office they socialized in, acted in part as a repository for ranching industry news and in part as a promotional tract.³⁸ The first issue was not reserved in its enthusiasm. “There is an abundance of unoccupied land and an increase in the number of cattle and cattle raisers will work to the advantage of all concerned,” the paper reported. “If the Bad Lands were full of cattle it would not decrease the price, as the demand is far in advance of the supply.” The publication then doubled-down on the idea that the region could foster endless wealth. “Word comes from Kansas that the cattle sections there are overstocked and the cattle men there are looking to the Northwest for relief,” the paper continued. “To all these we would say, come. There is plenty of room and you will be made welcome.”³⁹ Ranchers felt the same speculative excitement that bison hunters had experienced just several years earlier. Medora, home to the *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, played an important role in the national media frenzy that blew up around the ranching industry.

There was reason for excitement in the Badlands at the dawn of the ranching era. Technology and capital mingled in ways that complimented the business beyond just the railroads. This process is perhaps best illustrated by one of Roosevelt’s rivals in the region, the Marquis de Mores. A descendant of royalty and the son of a wealthy French textile factory owner, the Marquis defined both the capitalist logic and global ties that had entered the region with the ranching industry. De Mores saw the growing cattle industry in the West as a stepping-stone to becoming, in his words, “the richest financier in the world.”⁴⁰ Such a brash personality inevitably clashed with Roosevelt. In their shared time in the Badlands, the men weathered a grazing rights dispute regarding Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch and even sidestepped a possible duel when Roosevelt denied the Marquis’ vague accusations of bribery in connection with a murder that de Mores had allegedly committed.⁴¹ The Marquis, who spent most of his time in Medora, was notable as a purveyor of the globally capitalized West. He built a slaughterhouse in the

³⁵ Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 218.

³⁶ Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 81.

³⁷ “On the Range,” *Bad Lands Cow Boy* (Medora, Dakota Territory), February 7, 1884.

³⁸ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 267-268.

³⁹ *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, “Introductory.”

⁴⁰ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 188.

⁴¹ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 193-197, 299-304.

booming ranching town, one accentuated with refrigerated railcars and tied to a series of refrigeration stations stretching “from St. Paul, to Winnipeg, to Portland.”⁴² De Mores was not the first to ship dressed beef via railcar, but his Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company expanded upon previous operations.⁴³ The venture promised cheaper shipping costs for ranchers, who could now ship just the edible elements of the cattle that would go to market. Horns, hooves, and offal would no longer take up precious railcar space. De Mores’ Medora-based slaughterhouse also provided local Dakotans with affordable beef.⁴⁴

The Marquis’ icehouses, his investment in the railroads, and his vast herd of cattle illustrate the cosmopolitan nature of the open range industry in western Dakota. He accentuated the fact that this was not a down-home business. “Gentlemen who have undertaken stock raising with five or ten or twenty-five thousand dollars have invariably become tired of it and quit in disgust,” he reported to the *Montana Stock and Mining Journal* in 1884.⁴⁵ In the Marquis’ estimation, it took more than those considerable sums to be successful. It required corporate capitalism and a business model that connected the nation’s demand for a product with the hinterland’s available raw materials. The Marquis’ slaughterhouse and refrigeration operation was a sprawling business. According to de Mores, his slaughterhouse could handle 150 animals per day. In addition, he owned 15,000 acres of pasture surrounding the slaughterhouse. Daily sales of refrigerated beef reached \$6,000.⁴⁶ Because of investors like Roosevelt and de Mores, towns like Medora developed at a fast pace. Hotels, train depots, and saloons began to pop up in towns across western Dakota and eastern Montana. With all the sawing and hammering going on, the *Bad Lands Cow Boy* noted in its first issue that, “even at this time there is not a carpenter here but that has all the work he can possibly do. There will be an excellent chance for a large number more in the spring.”⁴⁷ Capitalistic ranching, tied to cities like Chicago, Paris, and London, was producing urban enclaves on the frontier. Corporations like the railroads and de Mores’ refrigeration company helped bring a new bustle to cities across the country.

⁴² Ad appearing on the last page of *Bad Lands Cow Boy* (Medora, Dakota Territory), February 7, 1884.

⁴³ Beef packers first used refrigerated railcars in Detroit in 1868. See Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 233.

⁴⁴ Donald Dresden, *The Marquis de Morès: Emperor of the Bad Lands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 130-131.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Dresden, *Marquis de Morès*, 132.

⁴⁶ Dresden, *Marquis de Morès*, 132-133.

⁴⁷ *Bad Lands Cow Boy* (Medora, Dakota Territory), February 7, 1884.



Remains of De Mores's packing plant, built in 1883 and destroyed by fire in 1907. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi

Stock-growers associations perhaps represent the starkest example of how corporatized, capital-intensive ranching simultaneously contradicted and shaped idealistic notions of the West. The associations contradicted the vision of the West as wilderness by insuring that those in the ranching business retained access to the “fenceless” frontier, even if that freedom came at the expense of others’ mobility. The associations held round-ups, encouraged “common” pasturage that remained freely navigable to local ranchers, and organized meetings where saloon-haunting cowboys and rich cattlemen convened in frontier towns. Stock-growers association meetings thrilled Roosevelt, who enthralled in the unique sights and sounds they offered:

...the whole place is overflowing, the importance of the meeting and the attendant frolics, especially the horse races, drawing from the surrounding ranch country many hundreds of men of every degree, from the rich stock-owner worth his millions to the ordinary cowboy who works for forty dollars a month. It would be impossible to imagine a more typically American assemblage, for although there are always a certain number of foreigners, usually English, Irish, or German, yet they have become completely

Americanized; and on the whole it would be difficult to gather a finer body of men, in spite of their numerous shortcomings.⁴⁸

Roosevelt latched onto the visceral, surface-level attractions which stock-growers' meetings revealed: the horses, the cowboys and their various personalities, and the rare and welcoming community which developed around the meetings. He felt that such an assemblage represented the best of the "pioneers of civilization." These men carried democratic ideals and virtues wherever they went. In Roosevelt's words, "the whole country owes them a great debt."⁴⁹

More importantly, stock-growers associations represented a vital facet of the capitalized, profit-oriented Badlands. The primary business administered at stock-growers meetings was the organization of the round-up, a spring-time tradition where ranchers from across the Badlands fanned out across the open range—including across what is today Theodore Roosevelt National Park—and gathered cattle for market. Ranchers, including Roosevelt, met every spring to plan how the entire territory of the Little Missouri Basin, "perhaps a hundred thousand square miles, is mapped out into round-up districts."⁵⁰ During the round-ups, stock-growers associations transformed the wide-open, wild range into rational, capitalistic cartographies.

In effect, the stock-growers corporations erected tacit boundaries all across the region via the round-up. In a physical sense, the Badlands were "fenceless," but stock-growers associations used their economic and political influence to create their own borders, limiting certain peoples' access to the range. One group they constrained through this process was American Indians. Ranch hand C. O. Armstrong noted how Indians along the Grand River in Dakota Territory would stop cattlemen and cowboys who worked the round-up, demanding payment for crossing reservation lands. Tribes felt this was justified, Armstrong explained, because "whenever the Indians went east the white men made them pay for everything, and they thought that we [whites] should do the same."⁵¹ The extirpation of bison, which opened the western prairies to ranchers, represented the ecological death knell for nomadic people who relied on the far-ranging bison as a primary food source.⁵² Reservations already confined and restricted the tribes' traditional mobility, but groups like stock-growers associations sought to constrain their mobility even further, as ranchers transformed former tribal lands into rationalized, capitalized landscapes where cattle and their drovers had the right of way.

Stock-growers associations eventually tried to bar fellow Euro-Americans from the Dakota range as well. In 1884, the *Bad Lands Cow Boy* had declared that all new ranchers and their herds were welcome in the Little Missouri River Valley, but the tone had changed by 1886. That year, the Little Missouri Stock-growers Association, which Roosevelt helped found and lead, "decided that the ranges in this round-up district were fully stocked, and that in the near future notice would be given that the men here would refuse to work with any new outfits

⁴⁸ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 18.

⁴⁹ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 18-19.

⁵⁰ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 71-72.

⁵¹ Albers and Tweton, *Way It Was, Book Three*, 6-7.

⁵² Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 249.

turning in cattle or horses.”⁵³ The freedom of the range was a partial myth, and the Little Missouri ranchers were laying an informal claim to the “open range” that is now part of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.⁵⁴ Such declarations stood as organized iterations of the downright threatening behavior that some ranchers exhibited towards newcomers. Ranchers in the Dakotas and elsewhere alighted upon land that railroads owned or that were part of the public domain. In this sense, the ranching frontier was open and free. Yet ranchers often held their claims in perpetuity, threatening newcomers who might move onto occupied lands that were technically public. “Many of them [Western ranchers] supposed that their costs for sustaining private arrangements with neighbours—or for intimidating neighbours, farmers, and sheepmen to stay off their part of the public domain—would amount to less than either lease fees or outlays for purchases,” wrote historian John C. Weaver. “Until encroachments absolutely threatened their cattle kingdoms, they thought that legal security of tenure was an unnecessary expense.”⁵⁵ Roosevelt and others celebrated the Badlands and the emotions that “the hardy life,” the buttes, and cow towns like Medora elicited, but the open range ranching industry and its corporate bodies dictated and limited the range’s accessibility.

Abstract, geographically distant decisions often dictated the nature of the ranching industry in western Dakota Territory in the 1880s. The system of mass production and mass consumption was essential to men like the Marquis de Mores and Theodore Roosevelt, who hoped to profit from their sizeable investments. Corporations, including the railroads and stock-growers associations, dictated not only the terms of the cattle business, but also how different groups moved through and experienced the region. Theodore Roosevelt National Park exists today because of the region’s connection to Theodore Roosevelt, a connection that cannot be separated from capital and corporations centered in local places but also in faraway cities. The park has more than just a local history. It was a landscape accentuated by global economic forces and capitalistic ideologies, evidenced by stock-growers associations and men like the Marquis.

By the mid-1880s, however, those global forces were causing local problems. The oligarchy of Little Missouri ranchers who closed the range in 1886 did so for a reason. Overgrazing was threatening the industry’s financial health. Despite the *Bad Lands Cow Boy’s* initial optimism, too many herds could mean falling prices. Yet as cattlemen would come to discover, their style of ranching posed an even more essential threat to the business. It threatened to dismantle the ecosystem upon which successful cattle raising relied. Before 1887 ended, the industry would be in tatters. Roosevelt himself would lose roughly half of his \$80,000 investment, leaving him “bluer than indigo about the cattle.”⁵⁶ Such financial losses sprang largely from how ranchers acted locally and from the ecological changes that their actions brought. Acting as engines of global capitalism, ranchers ushered in ecological change at an

⁵³ *Bismarck Tribune*, “Medora,” *Bismarck Tribune* (Bismarck, Dakota Territory), December 9, 1886, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o274373>.

⁵⁴ White, *Railroaded*, 475.

⁵⁵ John C. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 303.

⁵⁶ Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt, April 16, 1887, Theodore Roosevelt Collection, MS Am 1834 (229), Harvard College Library, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o280215>.

unprecedented rate. Instability was a symptom of plenty, and that instability was not unlike the current day capitalized fervor that threatens Theodore Roosevelt National Park in the form of the oil industry. Just as Dakota Territory's raw material in the form of bison and then cattle led to a rise in a capitalistic big business model in the 1880s, so the hinterland is again experiencing commodification of a natural resource in the form of oil to supply the nation. In this sense, interpretation at the park can connect contemporary resource extraction with that of the past, tying together stories of dizzying wealth and resultant volatility. Whether the story is ranching in the 1880s or fracking in the 2010s, market economies continue to shudder through the Badlands, bringing dynamic change to the region that now constitutes the park.

“The Great Die-Up”: The Price of Wealth in the Badlands

Ranchers and their herds brought about local changes to the Badlands' natural environment that were in some cases conspicuous, in other cases hidden and latent. The influx of settlers meant an increase in hunting in the area and the extirpation of many large species. The Marquis' local slaughterhouse provided beef to locals, which ironically was not widely available in cow towns like Medora. However, most ranchers and ranch-hands spent their time on the range or at secluded ranch houses, which meant wild game was their primary source of calories.⁵⁷ Elk, antelope, and deer suffered in the wake of the beef bonanza. Ranchers nearly eradicated other organisms native to the Badlands for different but unsurprising reasons. Newcomers killed wolves in large numbers due to the threat they posed to livestock. Cattle also changed the natural environment. Livestock for the most part consumed the same grasses that the bison had, but they did not range far from streams and riverbeds. Overgrazing in riparian areas heightened the risk of floods, not to mention eliminated food sources for other large grazing animals that frequented the same areas. While ranchers noted these effects, they did not fully grasp the problems that their cattle herds were causing until it was too late. A combination of overgrazing and the natural variance of the Northern Plains climate would spell doom for the open range cattle industry.

Promotional rhetoric painted the Badlands as a ranching paradise. The seeming abundance of game helped create such a picture. The effusive *Bad Lands Cow Boy* claimed, “beyond all doubt the Bad Lands furnish more game than any other place of equal area in the United States.” The paper waxed poetic about other aspects of the local environment. The Badlands “are practically worthless to larger farmers. ... To the gardener, however, they are as valuable as any lands in the Northwest.” Bunch and buffalo grass was plentiful, and “the coalfields of the Bad Lands contain enough coal to supply the world.”⁵⁸ The *Cow Boy* was right to be hopeful about the area's natural resources, even if it should have been cautious of such absolute claims. Large herds of animals still roamed the plains, buttes, and coulees.⁵⁹ The region was indeed not yet viable for farming, which meant less competition over land and resources for ranchers, and seams of coal ignited by lightning literally burned from the ground. Ranchers like

⁵⁷ “Observer,” *Bad Lands Cow Boy* (Medora, Dakota Territory), January 8, 1885, quoted in Dresden, *Marquis de Morès*, 130-131; Roosevelt, *Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 61.

⁵⁸ “The Bad Lands. Their Worth to the Stock Man, Miner, and Gardener,” *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, February 7, 1884.

⁵⁹ Albers and Tweton, *Way It Was*, 10.

Roosevelt used these coal deposits to heat their homes, and the railroads likely utilized local seams to fuel engines.⁶⁰ These “burning mines” especially struck Roosevelt: “A strong smell of sulfur hangs around them, the heated earth crumbles and cracks, and through the long clefts that form in it we can see the lurid glow of the subterranean fires, with here and there tongues of blue or cherry colored flame dancing up to the surface.”⁶¹ Subterranean fuels have long shaped peoples’ experiences in the Badlands. In the 1880s, fossil fuels burned naturally in what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and today the park experiences air and night sky pollution from flaring at nearby oil wells.



Burning off natural gas near Theodore Roosevelt National Park. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

It did not take long for Euro-American expansion to overstress the Badlands’ ecosystems. In June of 1884, Roosevelt wrote to his sister, “There is not much game...the cattle men have crowded it out and only a few antelope and deer remain.”⁶² The round-horn elk, a “stately and splendid deer,” was “fast vanishing.”⁶³ Roosevelt would lament in 1888 that small game was the

⁶⁰ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 46; Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 53.

⁶¹ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 108-109.

⁶² Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt, June 17, 1884, Theodore Roosevelt Collection, MS Am 1834 (197), Harvard College Library, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o279997>.

⁶³ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 201.

only type still in abundance in the areas surrounding his Elkhorn Ranch.⁶⁴ Roosevelt and other ranchers did not lament the extirpation of every species, though. “Almost every cattleman carries poison and neglects no chance of leaving out wolf bait,” wrote Roosevelt, “for the wolves are sources of serious loss for the unhoused flocks and herds.”⁶⁵ Stock-growers associations would fund bounties for wolves, and “wolfers” could make a living in places like the Badlands, committing their time to eliminating these predators as well as coyotes, lynxes, and bobcats.⁶⁶

While Roosevelt revered wildlife, he and his fellow ranchers primarily sought to create a landscape ideal for cattle raising, which meant reshaping wild ecosystems. Cattle “transported the fortunes of invading humans on their backs and their bones,” noted historian Jon T. Coleman, who has written about Americans’ relationship with wolves. Wolves and other predators “had no place in a society and an environment organized to produce marketable plants and animals.”⁶⁷ Even horses—perhaps the first image people think of when they consider the idealized, mythical West—risked death upon the range. Roosevelt recalled, “wild stallions are, whenever possible, shot; both because of their propensity for driving off the ranch mares, and because their incurable viciousness makes them always unsafe companions for other horses still more than for men.”⁶⁸ As a rancher who relied on the health of his own horses, Roosevelt looked with wary eyes upon the feral “mustangs” that delight Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s visitors today.

In some ways during the early 1880s, the idealized, cattle-centric world that ranchers desired came to fruition. In theory, ranchers simply had to wait for their cattle to fatten on the seemingly endless stretches of fenceless pasture that wrapped around the buttes and rocky plateaus. However, problems were beginning to arise. Cattle did not spread to the horizons, ingesting the grassland at equal and sustainable rates. Instead, they stuck to the same areas around water sources. Consequently, cattle quickly turned mixed grassland into a monolith of short grasses.⁶⁹ Ranchers also worked to eliminate fire from the prairie. Fires were not devastating among short grasses, “but they destroyed large quantities of feed,” Roosevelt recalled, “and we had to stop them where possible.”⁷⁰ On one occasion, the *Bad Lands Cow Boy* offered a \$250 reward for information about arsonists suspected of starting grassfires.⁷¹ However, prairie grasses evolved with fire, and removing fire from the ecosystem allowed for

⁶⁴ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 199.

⁶⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, “Getting Christmas Dinner on a Ranch,” *Everybody’s Magazine* 19 (July-December 1908): 852, Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treditorials/e2.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Di Silvestro, *Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands*, 137-38; Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry: Ranching on the Great Plains from 1865 to 1925* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 85.

⁶⁷ Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 2, 9.

⁶⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, “The Home Ranch,” *Century Magazine* 35, no. 5 (March 1888): 671, Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treditorials/c19.pdf>.

⁶⁹ White, *Railroaded*, 474-475.

⁷⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 108.

⁷¹ “Stock Notes,” *Bad Lands Cow Boy* (Medora, Dakota Territory), August 7, 1884, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o284452>.

the intrusion of weeds and woody vegetation, which decreased the amount of nutritious feed available on crowded pastures.⁷²

By the summer of 1886, the number of cattle on the prairie was pushing the Badlands ecosystem to the brink. Ranchers knew the risks of overgrazing, but they struggled to know how much land cattle denuded. An 1885 government report noted, “The ultimate limit of the capacity of the entire range and ranch cattle are of the United States for grazing...can of course only be ascertained from the results of experience.”⁷³ An 1884 Bureau of Animal Industry report noted that opinions on the appropriate amount of acreage for each animal ranged from twenty acres to 100 acres. The author took the middle road on the dispute. “Striking an average of 40 acres to an animal will give the range country a capacity for the maintenance of 34,000,000 of cattle, or about four times the present estimated number.”⁷⁴ The Dakota Territory had an estimated 346,000 cattle in 1884, which roughly amounted to 277 acres per animal. This supported the *Bad Lands Cow Boy’s* 1884 assertion that plenty of room remained for crowded-out southern ranchers. However, the Bureau of Animal Industry’s 1886 report struck a different chord. “From the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, east to the grain fields of the Missouri and Mississippi valleys, and reaching from the extremes of the north to the south, there is absolutely no spot where an unoccupied range can be secured for anything like a large herd of cattle.”⁷⁵ These reports offer clues as to why overgrazing became a problem in western Dakota Territory, and why it became a problem within only two years. The Bureau, as well as the industry’s creditors, relied on rough estimations to give a sense of the ranching business. Historian Richard White, referring to the West’s open range business, argued, “the cattle industry was a creature of finance, a phantasm of numbers and calculations so enticing and so disconnected from any underlying reality that numbers ceased to be representations and became their own world.”⁷⁶ Huge cattle operations did not invest the time or labor into providing accurate cattle counts. As a result, knowing whether a locality was overgrazed was impossible to discern until it was too late.

The realization that it was too late to address the issue of overgrazing came with the winter of 1886-1887. The Northern Plains’ open range cattle industry had already begun to suffer due to depressed prices. Investors exaggerated the need for the open range industry. The reality in the 1880s was that the Midwest dominated the business, sending many more cattle to market than did the Plains states. The Midwest also had higher quality cattle of new breeds fed on corn and other grains rather than grass. The cattle boom in the Northern Plains was largely a result of over-the-top speculation only partially grounded in reality. Railroad promotion played a major role in this. The railroads needed to create markets so that their investments would not go to

⁷² Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Prairies and Grasslands,” accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/nature/prairies.htm>.

⁷³ Nimmo, *Report in Regards to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business*, 19

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *First Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry for the Year 1884* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 236, HathiTrust Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000060118127?urlappend=%3Bseq=7>.

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry for the Year 1886* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), 107-108, HathiTrust Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000060118141;view=1up;seq=7>.

⁷⁶ White, *Railroaded*, 471.

waste.⁷⁷ Railroads and the cattle industry were part of a distinctly Euro-American, expansionist, capitalistic orientation toward resources. This view clashed with that of American Indians, who had for centuries utilized the Plains landscape by altering the ecosystem and extracting resources using low-intensity methods spread over a wide area due to their nomadic lifestyle. Whites had a different ethic when it came to land use, favoring an intensive use of resources over a sustained period that often stressed the land beyond its capacity.⁷⁸ Regardless of whether or not they fully realized the damage of their ecological practices, ranchers had overstocked the Badlands and they were becoming aware of it. Roosevelt spoke to the *Mandan Pioneer* in July 1886, arguing that, “The days of excessive profits are over. There are too many in the business. In certain sections of the west the losses this year are enormous, owing to the drouth and overstocking. Each steer needs from fifteen to twenty-five acres, but they are crowded on very much thicker, and the cattlemen this season have paid the penalty.”⁷⁹

Rough calculations can provide the present-day Badlands’ carrying capacity for cattle, and it quickly becomes apparent that the ranges were indeed overstocked in the mid-1880s. The Badlands region provides roughly 1,100 pounds of feed per acre. This means that 70,000 acres (the present-day size of Theodore Roosevelt National Park) provides seventy-seven million pounds of forage, but cattle only effectively consume a quarter of this amount. Cows weighing just over 1,200 pounds will consume 1,027 pounds of feed per month. Roosevelt helped the Little Missouri Stock-growers Association collect 4,000 cattle in the spring of 1885. Those 4,000 animals, each consuming 1,027 pounds of feed per month, would consume over forty-nine million pounds of feed per year, far in excess of the roughly nineteen million pounds of forage that the Badlands effectively provides.⁸⁰ Well over 4,000 cattle traversed the Badlands over the span of four years from 1883 to 1887. The Dakota Territory’s range was withering. The “fair land,” according to rancher John Clay, quickly became “bare as Sahara.”⁸¹

Cattle could last for a time on denuded ranges, but a bad winter would threaten the entire industry. Unluckily for western ranchers, the winter of 1886-1887 was one of the worst on record. Local legend contends that wildlife in the Badlands presaged the severe weather. Allegedly, beaver collected unprecedented amounts of wood that fall, the cattle grew thicker coats of fur than usual, and even the cottonwoods responded by growing extra layers of bark. The first snow fell on November 13, and substantial warmth did not return to the Badlands until March. Exceedingly cold temperatures, which set records that still stood over a century later, accompanied the snowfall. Deep snowdrifts froze into ice due to the oppressive cold, tormenting the cattle who struggled to dig through the drifts to the overgrazed, denuded earth beneath. Ranchers once believed that the Badlands topography would provide protection from snow for

⁷⁷ White, *Railroaded*, 476-477.

⁷⁸ See Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

⁷⁹ *Mandan Pioneer*, July 16, 1886, quoted in Ray H. Mattison, “The Hard Winter and the Range Cattle Business,” *Montana Magazine of History* 1, no. 4 (October 1951): 9.

⁸⁰ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 296; Amanda Hancock, “Doing the Math: Calculating a Sustainable Stocking Rate,” Central Grasslands Research Extension Center, 2006 CGREC Grass and Beef Research Review, North Dakota State University, North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/archive/streeter/2006report/aums/Doing%20the%20Math.htm>.

⁸¹ John Clay, *My Life on the Range* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 90.

beleaguered cattle. The various shelters at the bases of craggy, river-cut buttes would in theory shield cattle from the elements. The opposite became true in 1886-1887. Cattle indeed found shelter in coulees and valleys, but the drifts became so high the animals were buried alive. Theodore Roosevelt National Park's unique terrain acted as a maze of death traps. Animals that escaped the drifts searched in vain for forage, their legs bleeding as they broke through the icy shell that enveloped the snowy prairie. They ate whatever they could find, mostly cottonwood, brushwood, and willows. Such a diet would not have offered adequate nutrition. The cattle were exhibiting a last ditch effort at survival in the Badlands.⁸²

It is hard to estimate the number of cattle lost that winter. For one, accurate counts of pre-winter herds are hard to come by. Vast herds across the West, some numbering over 50,000 head, lost an estimated 80 percent of their cattle. The winter conditions reportedly reduced one outfit of 27,000 head to only 250 animals.⁸³ The disaster is perhaps best conveyed in qualitative terms. Roosevelt noted that his losses were "crippling." The West he had loved so much suddenly became a burden. "For the first time I have been utterly unable to enjoy a visit to my ranch," he wrote to his friend Henry Cabot Lodge after arriving in the Dakotas in the spring.⁸⁴ Gregor Lang's son Lincoln wrote that the bobbing carcasses of countless cattle clogged the Little Missouri River, which was surging by mid-March due to snowmelt.⁸⁵ "Three great streams of ill luck, mismanagement, greed met together," wrote rancher John Clay, "in other words, recklessness, want of foresight, and the weather, which no man can control."⁸⁶ The open range industry never recovered from that tripartite of circumstance and decision. The industry shifted to smaller, closely tended operations that were less susceptible to overstocking and rampant speculation. Roosevelt, the Marquis, and many others watched their investments turn into massive debts in the wake of that winter. Their physical presence in the Badlands was fleeting from then on, consigned to short visits to a once endless, open landscape that, in their absence, farmers quickly began to dot with fences and homesteads.

Conclusion

In many ways, the Theodore Roosevelt who ranched in western Dakota Territory shared very different values about the natural world than the present-day National Park Service, which administers the park that bears his name. While Roosevelt admired the wildlife that the Badlands fostered, his love for the region often revolved around adoration for the so-called "hardy life," hunting, and capital investment. He envisioned the Badlands as a useful landscape where those three ventures would coexist. However, with the collapse of the open range cattle industry, "forlorn little Medora," in Roosevelt's words, was "a 'busted' cow town," and the rest of the

⁸² Mattison, "Hard Winter and the Range Cattle Business," 6, 10, 17; Jenny Michael, "Winter of 1886-87 Stands as Coldest," *Bismarck Tribune* (Bismarck, North Dakota), January 31, 2009, accessed April 15, 2016, http://bismarcktribune.com/news/local/winter-of---stands-as-coldest/article_e31e9065-975c-551a-b3b1-e967e9231dc9.html; Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 365-366; White, *Railroaded*, 479; Dale, *Range Cattle Industry*, 94.

⁸³ Mattison, "Hard Winter and the Range Cattle Business," 18-19.

⁸⁴ Mattison, "Hard Winter and the Range Cattle Business," 17.

⁸⁵ Morris, *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 366-367.

⁸⁶ Clay, *My Life on the Range*, 172.

Badlands region became economically marginalized.⁸⁷ Roosevelt maintained an ambivalent relationship with western Dakota Territory. He romanticized the West and vehemently promoted the image he created of his fellow ranchers and cowboys as “pioneers of civilization.”⁸⁸ “Pioneers” was a fitting term to describe the ranchers, with its implication that the western wilderness could not and should not be preserved in perpetuity. “In its present form stocking-raising on the plains is doomed, and can hardly outlast the century,” Roosevelt wrote in 1888. “The great free ranches, with their barbarous, picturesque, and curiously fascinating surroundings, mark a primitive stage of existence as surely as do the great tracts of primeval forest, and like the latter must pass away before the onward march of our people.”⁸⁹ Roosevelt viewed American history as linear, and he viewed American society as perpetually progressing toward something greater. For the Northern Plains, that meant ranches had to concede to “the homesteaders, the permanent settlers, the men who took up each his own farm on which he lived and brought up his family, these represented from the National standpoint the most desirable of all possible users of, and dwellers on, the soil.”⁹⁰

Roosevelt preserved vestiges of the open range Badlands in his political beliefs as he embarked on a prolific public life. “No guests were ever more welcome at the White House than these old friends of the cattle-ranches and the cow camps,” Roosevelt recalled in his autobiography.⁹¹ Roosevelt recruited men he met on the range for the Rough Riders, who took Cuba by storm during the Spanish-American War.⁹² Ranch-hands like Bill Sewall and Wilmot Dow represented the first instance where Roosevelt anthropomorphized “bull-moose.”⁹³ Perhaps most importantly, he left the Badlands with firsthand knowledge of how humans can precipitate dramatic, often detrimental changes to the natural world. Roosevelt grew up in an aristocratic family, and capitalistic consumption and investment was second nature to him. Nevertheless, as the country’s first conservationist president, he came to see nature as a resource worth saving, not simply as a commodity for capitalistic exploitation. His experiences in the Badlands primed him to begin thinking about how social and economic forces threatened the natural world. In these ways and others, Roosevelt kept the Badlands with him throughout the rest of his life. The landscape and ranching life shaped the values and beliefs that formed the foundation of his public policies.

⁸⁷ Roosevelt, “In Cowboy-Land,” 280.

⁸⁸ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 18-19.

⁸⁹ Roosevelt, “Ranch Life in the Far West,” 510.

⁹⁰ Roosevelt, *Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 59.

⁹¹ Roosevelt, *Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 76.

⁹² Roosevelt, *Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 77.

⁹³ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 161.

Chapter 4

Theodore Roosevelt, the Global West, and the Conservation Movement, 1887-1919

Nicholas Gunvaldson

When Theodore Roosevelt stepped onto a railcar to leave the Dakota Badlands for good following the winter of 1887, the people of Medora perhaps never imagined that he would carry his stories, friendships, and experiences from that rugged and trying place into the loftiest centers of power. Just as the Badlands operated for American Indians as a central crossroads of their world for thousands of years, this place held a central position in Roosevelt's thinking as he traveled across the world and into the Presidency. Surely it would have flattered South Dakota sheriff Seth Bullock to know that when Roosevelt explained the virtues of being a "two-gun man" to Hungarian royalty, he cited Bullock as the prime example of justice in a place where "homicide [was] a regrettable but inevitable incident of a political career in territorial days."¹ Later, when Roosevelt spoke about protecting the land and its many animals for future generations, his mind traveled back to long days in the saddle, to cozy evenings at Elkhorn Ranch, and to many freezing nights alongside the scintillating Little Missouri River. In time, Roosevelt's log cabin became known as "the Cradle of Conservation."² The lessons he learned in Dakota Territory and the West never left him; in that land, he saw a vision of what the United States could become, if it was shielded from the excesses of the rapidly maturing nation.

For a young Theodore Roosevelt, natural landscapes had always been a place of excitement, wonder, and rejuvenation. As early as 1871, he had delighted in the "cool, invigorating air" of the Adirondack Mountains where he hunted small game and reveled in the sounds of birds and the company of majestic deciduous trees that often reached "the height of a hundred feet, and the white pines even that of a hundred and thirty."³ The following year his parents sent Roosevelt on a tour of Egypt, Syria, and Germany, where he occupied his time with hunting and cataloguing species new to him. Years later Roosevelt wrote that his "first real collecting as a student of natural history" began in Egypt.⁴ Entering Harvard University in the fall of 1876, Roosevelt studied natural history with the eminent Louis Agassiz, the European-born naturalist. Along with his friend Henry Minot, he published several pamphlets, leaflets, and short articles about birds local to New England. However, the world of academic study proved to be too small and confining for Roosevelt's interests, and following the death of his mother and beloved wife in 1884, he returned to the Dakotas to become a rancher. As his friend Lincoln

¹ Theodore Roosevelt to George Otto Trevelyan, October 1, 1911, in Theodore Roosevelt, *Cowboys and Kings: Three Great Letters. With an Introduction by Elting E. Morison* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 52.

² Lowell E. Baier, "The Cradle of Conservation: Theodore Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch, an Icon of America's National Identity," *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal* 28, no. 1 (2007): 15-22.

³ Paul Russell Cutright, *Theodore Roosevelt: The Making of a Conservationist* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 37.

⁴ Cutright, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 45.

Lang remembered, “he was in love with the Bad Lands and wanted to be...[a part] of it.”⁵ Roosevelt’s time in the Badlands profoundly influenced his subsequent political career, and his early experiences there proved instrumental in developing his environmental philosophy and conservation ethic, which became codified in federal law during his presidency. As a young rancher, Roosevelt thought of the land and its animals as commodities to exploit, but as he grew older, he gradually saw that the nation needed to protect and preserve its natural and cultural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. For Roosevelt, the proper conservation of the nation’s natural resources was the single most effective method to protect the values that defined American manhood and American international might—ideas that were intricately interwoven into late-nineteenth century conceptions of nationalism and civic identity.

Between 1887 and 1901, Roosevelt transformed his western experiences into the stuff of western legend, and through his writing and speeches, he became the West’s most prominent spokesman, historian, hunter, and conservationist. Roosevelt spent the years following his departure from the Badlands forming vital alliances with distinguished hunters and preservationists who had both the practical knowledge and the political sway to galvanize the conservation movement into something not only recognizable and respectable, but also intellectually and economically justifiable. Naturalists like John Muir and George Bird Grinnell, foresters like Gifford Pinchot, and landscape architects like Frederick Law Olmsted were forerunners of a national shift toward land conservation and preservation. These men questioned the nation’s unconstrained capitalistic expansion, but found that the federal government often supported big industry to the detriment of natural resource conservation. In Roosevelt, early conservationists found a strong champion and political leader to help them turn their goals into legislative realities. While Roosevelt battled corruption and the American spoils system as one of the first members of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, he also forged connections between prominent naturalists and activists on both sides of the Atlantic, men like George Bird Grinnell, Gifford Pinchot, and Sir Horace Plunkett. These men helped the intrepid cowboy-politician lay the foundation for a movement that would ultimately span the globe. In 1906, John Burroughs, an American author and naturalist and one of Roosevelt’s friends, explained Roosevelt’s trajectory. “Had he not gone West ... he would never would have raised the Rough Riders Regiment; and had he not raised that regiment and gone to the Cuban War, he would not have been made governor of New York; and had this not happened, the politicians would not unwittingly have made his rise to the Presidency so inevitable.”⁶ His political career and all the contradictions that Roosevelt embodied during his life (hunter/conservator, capitalist/trust-buster, nationalist/social Darwinist) make more sense if traced back to his time in the Dakotas.

In his first public speech upon assuming the presidency in 1901, Roosevelt immediately established that natural resource conservation would be one of the defining aspects of his time in office. The twenty-sixth president argued that the wild areas of the American continent needed protection for “the ever-increasing numbers of men and women who have learned to find rest, health, and recreation in the splendid forests and flower-clad meadows of our mountains.” Just as

⁵ Quoted in Michael L. Collins, *That Damned Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and the American West, 1883-1898* (New York City: Peter Lang, 1989), 21.

⁶ John Burroughs, *Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt: With Illustrations* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 15, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/campingwithroosevelt.pdf>.

Roosevelt did on his own trip to the Dakotas in 1883, all people should be able to enjoy the salvific effects of the great outdoors. Indeed, he insisted that the “forest reserves should be set apart forever for the use and benefit of our people as a whole, and not sacrificed to the shortsighted greed of a few.”⁷ Once an enthusiastic investor and natural resource exploiter, Roosevelt had changed since his days ranching and hunting. As he grew older, he increasingly witnessed how the industrial vision of national growth sacrificed North American wildlife and untrammelled spaces for a few quick dollars. In his mind and the minds of others, notably early historian Frederick Jackson Turner, those aspects of the landscape were essential to the unique American identity. Although the Badlands clearly spoke to him, Roosevelt also felt the need to protect the otherwise voiceless wilderness generally. Yet this vision quickly placed him and his fellow conservationists at odds with western miners and lumbermen, eastern capitalists, and the burgeoning coal, steel, lumber, oil, and gas industries, who argued that resource exploitation was the best way to continue the nation’s remarkable growth.

Moreover, whether most Americans fully realized it or not, by the early twentieth century environmental protection was rapidly developing into a global issue requiring international cooperation. In a letter to the governments of Canada and Mexico, Roosevelt insisted, “natural resources are not limited by the boundary lines which separate nations, and that the need for conserving them upon this continent is as wide as the area upon which they exist.”⁸ For reformers like Roosevelt, the world had become a much larger place, and it desperately needed saving.

Roosevelt after the Badlands

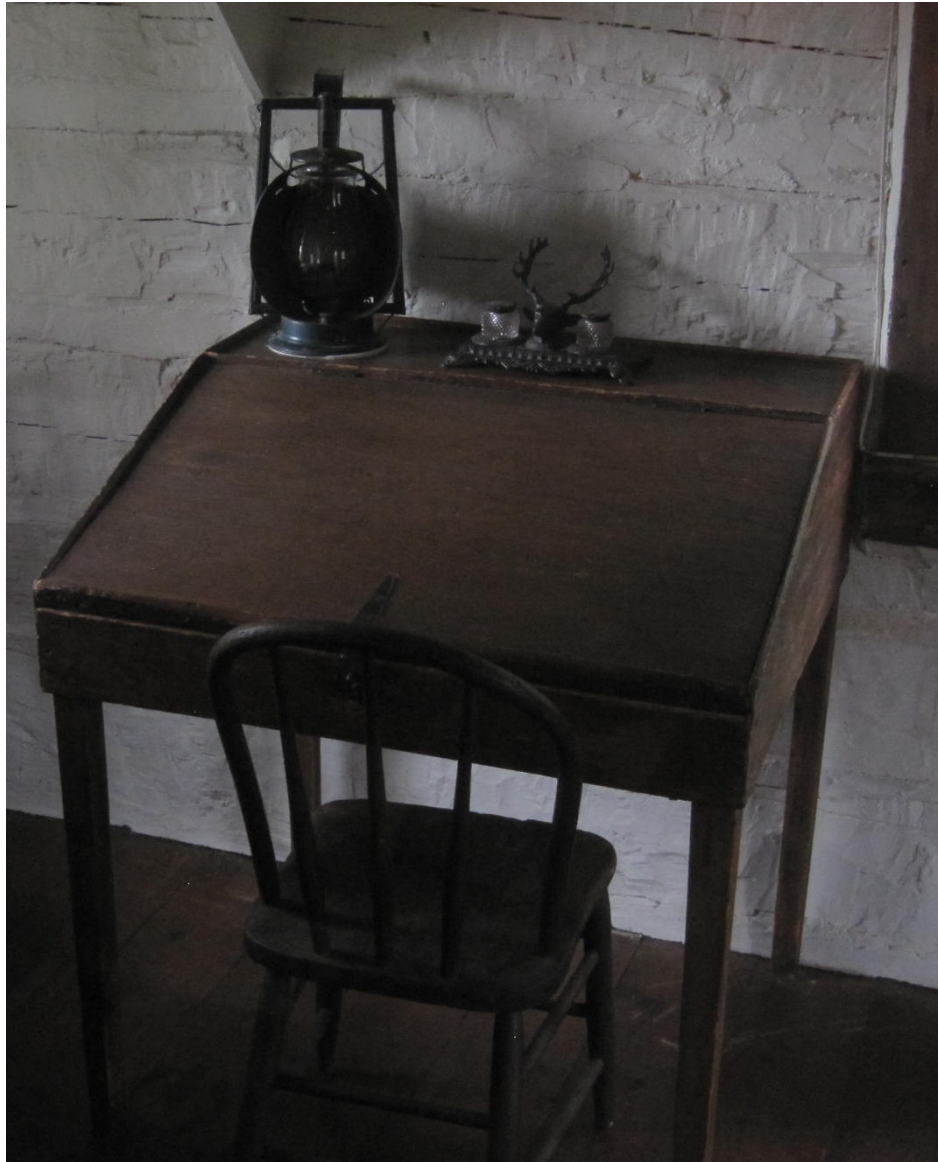
In 1887, Roosevelt returned to New York from the Badlands a very different man. At twenty-nine years old, he was no longer the spindle-legged, asthmatic boy of his youth, but rather a lean-muscled, weather-beaten, sun-hardened westerner. In 1885, Roosevelt had published *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, a chronicle of his exploits in the West, which contained a photograph of the man who would be president. He was dressed from head to heel in leather, with a buckskin jacket, long hunting knife, and a long rifle. His eyes stared away from the camera and his gun aimed ahead, as if scanning the forests and plains for elusive but worthy quarry like grizzly bears, bighorn sheep, or elk. Roosevelt claimed that he was “always after as noble and lordly game as is to be found in the Western World.”⁹ This image, staged in New York, froze a young and adventurous Roosevelt in time. It proudly demonstrated his belief in virtues such as “self-reliance, hardihood, and the value of instant decision,” which he saw as the ideal result of manly interactions with the western environment. At a glance, however, this photo also reflected the tension between hunters and conservators, and asked whether it is possible to be both. In this image, did Roosevelt endeavor to protect game, or to butcher it? He followed up on *Hunting Trips* with *Thomas Hart Benton* in 1887, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* in 1888,

⁷ “President Roosevelt’s First Message,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1901, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9804E5DE153FE433A25757C0A9649D946097D6CF>.

⁸ “Roosevelt Invites Canada and Mexico: Calls a North American Conference on Conservation of Resources for Feb. 18,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1908, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9F07E3D9113EE233A2575BC2A9649D946997D6CF>.

⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New York City: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1885), 294.

and the first volume of *Winning of the West* in 1889. Devoted to writing, he did not immediately return to politics. Instead, with his devotion to the Badlands established, Roosevelt engaged more than ever with the wilderness on an intellectual level.



Desk at which Roosevelt did much of his writing while in the Badlands. It was never enough for his liking, however. Now located in the Maltese Cross Cabin. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

In *Hunting Trips*, many of Roosevelt's exploits reveal similar contradictions to his claim that he differed from those "butchers at their brutal work of slaughtering."¹⁰ For instance, he argued that "while the slaughter of the buffalo has been in places needless and brutal," it was still

¹⁰ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 140.

a “blessing” because “the extermination of the buffalo was the only way of solving the Indian question.”¹¹ His opinions about American Indians were largely informed by his time in the Badlands, where, although he only encountered small bands of Plains tribes, campfire stories told second-hand by cowboys and fellow ranchers described countless and often exaggerated atrocities committed by American Indians. *Hunting Trips* even ended climactically, with Roosevelt and his friend William “Bill” Merrifield tracking and killing a nine-foot tall, 1,200-pound grizzly, before killing a mother and cub in the coming days. Without understanding his own role in a changing ecosystem, Roosevelt later explained to a *New York Times* reviewer that he believed the animal had learned caution, being “not the ferocious animal described 25 years ago.”¹² The reviewer, after describing *Hunting Trips*, noted that “[eastern] parties regularly entrap bears by means of 100-pound steel traps” that leave “the grizzly bear completely at their mercy, like a rat in a cage.”¹³ Another reviewer, the naturalist George Bird Grinnell, also found problems with Roosevelt’s work. “Mr. Roosevelt is not well known as a sportsman, and his experience of the Western country is quite limited, but this very fact in one way lends an added charm to this book,” Grinnell wrote in 1885.¹⁴

Frustrated and disappointed, Roosevelt stormed into Grinnell’s office and demanded an explanation. Roosevelt quickly discovered that Grinnell’s critiques of *Hunting Trips* came from his hard-won and extensive knowledge of the western flora and fauna—in truth, the men had more in common than in contrast. Once Roosevelt’s anger cooled, the conversation quickly turned to their shared passion: the conservation of big game. “Roosevelt called often at my office to discuss the broad country that we both loved, and we came to know each other extremely well,” Grinnell recalled.¹⁵ Like Roosevelt, Grinnell was a New York native, a hunter, and an Ivy League trained naturalist who wanted to do more than simply study wildlife in the stuffy halls of the university; he wanted to get his boots muddy. Grinnell’s accomplishments were noteworthy: he dug for ancient species in a Yale-sponsored 1870 Great Plains fossils dig, he maintained a deep and committed relationship with Plains tribes (he gained honorary membership in the Pawnee tribe, and other tribes bestowed special names upon him), and he was widely published. Grinnell demonstrated to Roosevelt how large and diverse the West was, and that if he wanted to protect it, he would need the knowledge and assistance of other elites.¹⁶

As historian Monica Rico explained, Grinnell and Roosevelt were not alone; elite men on both sides of the Atlantic saw the American West “as a global West, as one developing frontier, one colonial enterprise, among many around the globe,” and like Roosevelt, donned buckskin, purchased silver-plated pistols and monogrammed spurs, and hunted and lived in the West.¹⁷ Irishman Horace Plunkett and Englishman Moreton Frewan both ranched in Wyoming in the

¹¹ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 249.

¹² “The Game of the West,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1885, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9C00E0DF153FE533A25750C1A9619C94649FD7CF>.

¹³ “The Game of the West,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1885.

¹⁴ Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York City: HarperCollins, 2009), 184.

¹⁵ Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior*, 186.

¹⁶ Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior*, 186-188.

¹⁷ Monica Rico, *Nature’s Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 4.

1880s. They later became friends with Roosevelt; Plunkett advised Roosevelt on agricultural policy during Roosevelt's presidency and Frewan pitched in to buy him a rifle for his Africa expedition. Other men joined Roosevelt in elite western clubs like the Cheyenne Club, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, a social organization considered the "pearl of the prairies" by American writer Owen Wister.¹⁸ The West as a territory served as a proving ground for elite men. Roosevelt's Badlands experiences, like the Western experiences of Grinnell, Frewan, and Plunkett, shaped him physically and mentally for later conservation efforts that required a direct knowledge of the land and the problems it faced. Roosevelt's later successes in natural resource conservation can be traced to the bonds formed between him and other elite hunters, ranchers, writers, and travelers who shared a manly passion for the West and its wonders.



Theodore Roosevelt (center) clad in buckskin with Wilmot Dow (left) and Bill Sewall (right). Photo from Dickinson State University Theodore Roosevelt Center (used with permission).¹⁹

In 1887, Roosevelt and Grinnell founded the Boone and Crockett Club, named after the two famed American frontiersmen, and set about protecting land with the goal of promoting "manly sport with the rifle" and "the preservation of the game of the country."²⁰ Even

¹⁸ Rico, *Nature's Noblemen*, 9. The Cheyenne Club was founded in 1880. Membership was limited to fifty people with dues set at \$30 and entrance fees at \$50. The membership was diverse, but wealthy northeasterners and the British landed class predominated.

¹⁹ *Theodore Roosevelt with Two Friends*, 1886. Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site. <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o286622>, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University, Dickinson, North Dakota.

²⁰ "Wild Animals of the Far West," *New York Times*, December 17, 1893, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9F01E5DD113BEF33A25754C1A9649D94629ED7CF>.

Roosevelt's favorite childhood haunt, the Adirondack Mountains, was every year further "despoiled" by the lumbermen's "relentless axe" despite protective measures enacted in 1884 for the area's preservation. The threat posed by the lumber industry, and especially the railroads—which "have stripped the hills and valleys [of the Adirondacks] tributary to their lines and have rendered sterile and desolate vast tracts of what was once the most beautiful of sylvan scenery and rough, verdant landscape"—was certainly not unique to New York. In the West, where railroad companies owned vast tracts of land, the threat of losing those "priceless sources of health, or recreation, or both" was very real.²¹ As historian Douglas Brinkley noted, "Railroads had an insatiable appetite for timber, needing wood for railway carriages, stations, platforms, fences, and, of course, the ties for their expanding network of tracks." As a case in point, "in 1887, *Scientific Monthly* estimated that the railroads need[ed] 73 million new ties each year."²²

Although a convenient target for politicians at the time and scholars later, the railroads' role in conservation was more complex than that. On one hand, the railroads promoted and fed human demand for transportation and the shipping of settlers, building materials, and manufactured goods into the frontier and raw materials out. On the other, railroads often led efforts to conserve western water, soil, and forest resources and even, most notably in the case of Yellowstone National Park, threw their considerable influence behind preservation of lands in national parks. Meanwhile, the residents of the West—who sought quick fortunes and gave little thought to resource waste—also gobbled up natural resources, ripping open the earth in search of precious minerals, chopping down trees to build and heat homes, diverting rivers for irrigated agriculture, and tearing up the prairie sod to plant crops. Yet conservationists usually pointed the finger at the railroad, lumber, and mining industries rather than at settlers. In their view, settlers were merely improving upon and taming the wild western landscape, but big industry was denuding it.²³ Men like Roosevelt thus sprang to action to fight capitalism's worst excesses and preserve some vestiges of the West's natural resources and pristine landscapes.

Spurred on by the Boone and Crockett Club, whose members and influence breached the halls of government, Congress quickly passed legislation designed to protect the nation's forests. The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 was powerful enough, if somewhat hastily drafted, to stop private interests from denuding forests and spoiling rivers and streams. Section 24, which Gifford Pinchot later described as "the most important legislation in the history of Forestry in America...the beginning and basis of our whole National Forest system," gave the President the power to "set apart and reserve," but not manage, "any part of the public lands wholly or partly covered with timber...."²⁴ Western states protested vehemently, and it took until 1897 for the government to produce guidelines for the use and management of forest reserves.

The Forest Reserve Act was a major win for Roosevelt and the Boone and Crockett Club, and additional legislation followed. Twenty-seven days after signing the Forest Reserve Act,

²¹ "The Adirondack Vandals," *New York Times*, August 21, 1890, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D00E4DF103BE533A25752C2A96E9C94619ED7CF>.

²² Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 237.

²³ Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 2011), xxiv-xxv; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 1991), 92, 203, 206, 223-224.

²⁴ Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York City: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), 85.

President Harrison issued “Proclamation 303,” the withdrawal of Yellowstone National Park lands, giving express warning to “all persons not to enter or make settlement upon the tract of land reserved by this proclamation.”²⁵ A decade before, in 1880, Yellowstone’s most active industry had been bison hunting, with a *New York Times* article observing, “10,000 buffalo have been thus slaughtered for their hides in the Yellowstone Valley this season.”²⁶ The same article speculated that the depleted bison herds would bring the Crow peoples into conflict with settlers, because the “Crow Reservation is unquestionably the garden spot of the Yellowstone Valley, and as such it is exciting the envy of white settlers.”²⁷ Several years before Proclamation 303, George Bird Grinnell noted that “more or less hunting goes on there [Yellowstone] constantly...and I myself heard shooting at geese and swans...”²⁸ More dastardly to Grinnell than hunting was the destruction of the geyser craters and hot spring rims by tourists ignorant to the long geological processes that formed these now-iconic areas:

On my way out of the park I saw half a dozen Englishmen and Americans, each of whom had a good size box of rocks weighting from 40 to 60 pounds, which they spoke of rather grandiosely as their “specimens,” and it must be understood that for each pound of rock which the tourist brings away with him he has torn down and broken up near a hundred. As the process by which the geyserite is deposited is well understood to be very slow, it can readily be seen that the destruction caused by this means can only be repaired after the lapse of many years.²⁹

Protecting what Grinnell accurately described as “natural wonders” had an immediate effect on Yellowstone National Park’s flora, fauna, and physical environment. In 1899, Yellowstone’s superintendent Oscar Brown issued his annual report on the park’s incredible growth. He noted the increase in pronghorn and deer, elk herds rapidly growing to populations between 35,000 to 60,000, and bear “increasing and constantly breaking into buildings” and “coyotes,” that “are far too numerous.”³⁰ The Yellowstone experiment was a remarkable success in protecting western wildlife; by the turn of the century, the park boasted of having the largest bison herd owned by the government.

Meanwhile, Roosevelt and Madison Grant, a prominent explorer, lawyer, and eugenicist, along with the rest of the Boone and Crockett Club, attempted to solve the bison crisis with a close to home approach. In 1894, the club founded the New York Zoological Society to create a zoo in Bronx built “on lines entirely divergent from the Old World zoological gardens.” Its primary objective would be “to secure herds—not merely individuals—of each of the large North American quadrupeds, and to place them as far as possible in surroundings identical with

²⁵ President Benjamin Harrison, “Proclamation 303 - Withdrawal of Yellowstone Park Lands for Forest Reserve, Wyoming,” March 30, 1891, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=71005>.

²⁶ “Montana’s Indian Puzzle,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1880, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D00E3DC1F31EE3ABC4C53DFB266838B699FDE>.

²⁷ “Montana’s Indian Puzzle,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1880.

²⁸ George Bird Grinnell, “Protection of the National Park,” *New York Times*, January 29, 1885, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9C07EFDE1138E033A2575AC2A9679C94649FD7CF>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Great Game Preserve,” *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, OR), November 29, 1899.

or closely resembling their natural habitats.”³¹ Roosevelt dreamed of bringing the West to the East for New Yorkers in the form of the bison, which would be bred before being reintroduced to their native habitats in “natural preserves” such as the North Dakota Badlands. However, the grasses native to the Bronx could not support the bison herd, and many of the animals soon died. William T. Hornaday, president of the New York Zoological Society, brought in zookeepers to hand-feed the bison on prairie grass varieties like Dakota’s big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) and blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*).³² While Roosevelt was deeply saddened when the bison did not flourish in New York, he took heart that his breeding efforts elsewhere in the West seemed to be working. In 1914, he sent a small herd from the Bronx Zoo to the Dakotas, where they thrived and gradually expanded their territory. The herd furnished breeding stock for two new herds in Iowa and Missouri. In 2014, The Nature Conservancy reintroduced bison in Illinois, and the animals traced their lineage through the Iowa, Missouri, and South Dakota herds back to the Bronx Zoo.³³

In 1897, while the Bronx Zoo was preparing to open its doors to the public, Roosevelt accepted an appointment by President McKinley as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Following the heavy-handed Spanish repression of Cuban Revolutionaries, Roosevelt could hear the drums of war, and he wanted to be in a position where he could influence the course of events should war with Spain become inevitable. Roosevelt was an ardent social Darwinist who believed that the history and identity of the American people was defined by conflict between the races over the control of natural resources. “A race of peaceful, unwarlike farmers,” Roosevelt wrote, “would have been helpless before such foes as the red Indians.... The West would never have been settled save for the fierce courage and the eager desire to brave danger so characteristic of the stalwart backwoodsmen.”³⁴ As historian Gary Gerstle noted, “The war to exterminate the Indian created the ‘Americans.’”³⁵ It was only natural that when Roosevelt raised a volunteer cavalry regiment following President McKinley’s hesitant declaration of war, Roosevelt looked to those Americans who had most recently engaged in the strenuous exertion of their nation’s values and who had yet to experience the degenerative effects of modern civilization seen in the East and in Europe. Roosevelt recruited broncobusters, Ivy League sportsmen, and “a few from everywhere including a score of Indians, and about as many of Mexican origin from New Mexico” to fill the regiment, which he called the Rough Riders.³⁶ Roosevelt’s leadership of the Rough Riders relied upon his experiences in the West to justify the racial superiority of Anglo-Americans over his Spanish adversaries, the Cuban revolutionaries, the Filipino insurrectionists, and even his fellow African-American soldiers. As the Rough Riders departed their training grounds in San Antonio, Texas for their embarkation point at Tampa Bay, Florida, they looked forward to proving their mettle, ready to “throttle the sons of

³¹ George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, *Trail and Camp-Fire: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York City: Forest and Stream, 1897), 313, 317.

³² Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 284.

³³ Emma Morgenstern, “What Happens When You Reintroduce a Nearly-Extinct Species Back to its Home?” *Modern Notion*, May 13, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://modernnotion.com/bison-illinois-nachusa/>.

³⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Vol I; From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi*, (New York City: Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 45.

³⁵ Gary Gerstle, “Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism,” *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1283.

³⁶ Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, May 25, 1898, quoted in Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 315.

Spain.”³⁷ Comparing the experiences of soldiers portrayed in “various sociological books by authors of Continental Europe,” Roosevelt was glad that his men avoided “their minute and machine-like efficiency” which “tends to dwarf the capacity for individual initiative among the officers and men.” Instead, his men displayed “an advanced individualism,” a characteristic feature of the broncobusters, explorers, and settlers of the West.³⁸

For Roosevelt, even that vigorous anticipation for war could not dull his appreciation for the environment around him, nor could it stop him from noting the sounds and plumage of birds or the composition of Florida’s forests and swamps. While waiting to depart for Cuba, Roosevelt occupied himself by reading social Darwinist tracts like Edmond Demoulin’s *Supériorité des Anglo Saxons* (1897) and by learning to distinguish between Florida’s various plants and animals such as “lignum-vitae (hollywood) trees from blue beech and ironwood at a glance.”³⁹ With time on his hands in Tampa, Roosevelt prowled Florida’s estuaries, swamps, and beaches attempting to identify the many bird species written about by his Uncle Robert in *Florida and Game Water Birds* (1868). Here, as in the West, he could not ignore those who slaughtered native wildlife for material gain, creating “huge mounds [which] could be seen around the port of Tampa, bird carcasses piled twenty or thirty yards high and rotting in the sun.”⁴⁰ Roosevelt’s shock at this grotesque sight—after all, “bird-collecting” was Roosevelt’s childhood entre into conservation work—may have led to his establishment by executive order of Pelican Island Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Such experiences may also have prompted his support for local and railroad promotion of Crater Lake National Park in Oregon and the more than fifty bird reserves in twenty states and territories he helped establish during his time in office.⁴¹ As Roosevelt prepared to fight in the Spanish-American War, one of the nation’s most significant imperial endeavors, his outlook was informed by a transatlantic relationship between competing racial hierarchies, the landscape, and how to best govern its natural resources—whether they were prairies in the Dakotas, Floridian birds, or Cuba’s notorious Bermuda crab.

Upon Colonel Roosevelt’s return from the Spanish-American War, he was widely lauded as an American hero and his supporters propelled him into political office. One of Roosevelt’s earliest biographers, Lord Charnwood, recognized that his successes arose from his unique combination of “the sound traditions of the civilized” with the simple strengths of the natural man cultivated in the West.⁴² Later that year, the state of New York elected him governor. On March 4, 1901, he was inaugurated as vice president to William McKinley, and a mere six months later, following the President’s assassination, Roosevelt began charting a new course for the nation that would preserve for all Americans the experiences and values that made his own rise so meteoric. Roosevelt’s love for the hunt never diminished. In the Dakotas, he was an

³⁷ Peggy Samuels and Harold Samuels, *Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 58.

³⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York City: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 232.

³⁹ Douglas Brinkley, “TR’s Wild Side,” *American Heritage* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 26.

⁴⁰ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 320.

⁴¹ Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 19, 420-422; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 166.

⁴² John A. Barsness, “Theodore Roosevelt as Cowboy: The Virginian as Jacksonian Man,” *American Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1969): 613.

ardent rancher-capitalist, but as he aged, he focused more on the conservation of the land and its beasts. At the start of his presidency, Roosevelt lauded American naturalist and writer Herbert Keightley Job in a private letter for “the good which comes from such books as yours [*The Sport of Bird Study*] and from the substitution of the camera for the gun. The older I grow the less I care to shoot anything except ‘varmints’”⁴³

Roosevelt in the White House

It took some time for Roosevelt to gather the political might he needed to implement his vision of a modern, rejuvenated, and manly United States. If his experiences in the Badlands had strengthened his body and sharpened his thinking, then his role in the Spanish-American War was equally transformative. Earlier, he was a dedicated, often brash, and over-eager reformer. Now he was an American icon, a hero of undisputed proportions, and a champion of the regenerative properties of the American West. While in the White House, Roosevelt relied on prominent social activists, capitalists and businessmen, and conservationists to form his administrative policy. He implemented the ideas of men like Gifford Pinchot, Roosevelt’s friend and McKinley’s Chief Forester, bringing Pinchot’s knowledge of European forestry management to bear on America’s forests and giving him nearly free reign to run the Department of Agriculture as he saw fit. Roosevelt and Pinchot “were appalled by the human destruction of nature everywhere visible in early-twentieth century America,” observed historian Char Miller, and in many ways this assessment could be broadened to include all the forest denudation, river pollution, and wildlife exploitation occurring across the world.⁴⁴ Roosevelt saw conservationism as an international concern. He feared that “what has thus happened in northern China, what has happened in central Asia, in Palestine, in North Africa, in parts of the Mediterranean countries of Europe, will surely happen in our country if we do not exercise that wise foresight which should be one of the chief marks of any people calling itself civilized.”⁴⁵ Roosevelt formed his domestic environmental policy, as well as his military, social, and economic policies, in a globalized context of imperialism and social Darwinism that dominated American and European political discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Issues about America’s position in the world weighed heavily on his mind as President Roosevelt traveled across the western United States on his “Great Loop” tour of 1903, visiting the Grand Canyon and the “veritable wonderland” of Yellowstone and posing with naturalist John Muir in Yosemite.⁴⁶ Much like historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who reviewed Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West* in 1889, Roosevelt believed that western expansion was a

⁴³ Theodore Roosevelt to Herbert Keightley Job, September 29, 1902, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o183145>.

⁴⁴ Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001), 147.

⁴⁵ Cutright, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 219.

⁴⁶ Speech of President Roosevelt at Laying of the Cornerstones of Gateway to Yellowstone National Park, Gardiner, Montana, April 24, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o289720>.

process that defined American character. He argued that in places like the Badlands, the “defiant individualism” of men collided with a uniquely democratic landscape with “great equality of conditions” since “land was plenty and all else was scarce.”⁴⁷ Unlike Turner, Roosevelt did not lament the closing of the American frontier—in many ways he was busily carving out new frontiers in Panama and the Philippines—but he always emphasized the need to protect the American frontier so that future citizens could engage with the same westering process. But westerners—from small operators seeking quick fortunes to politicians and large corporate interests—often challenged Roosevelt in his protection efforts.⁴⁸ With his mind set on protecting the Grand Canyon and Petrified Forest in Arizona, Mesa Verde in Colorado, and Devils Tower in Wyoming, Roosevelt signed into law on June 6, 1906 “An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities,” better known as the Antiquities Act. Put forward with the help of Congressman John F. Lacey of Iowa, New Mexican archeologist and anthropologist Edgar Lee Hewett, W. H. Holmes of the Smithsonian Institution, and Biblical archeologist Henry Mason-Baum, the Antiquities Act allowed the president unilateral power to designate “historical landmarks, historic preservation structures, and other objects of scientific interest” as national monuments.⁴⁹ In establishing the Antiquities Act, as with so much else in his presidency, Roosevelt was the most visible figure in a broad American shift of consciousness that increasingly embraced natural resource conservation and challenged previous western visions of rapid and unlimited exploitation.

Initially the only real limitation to the Antiquities Act, the strongest tool in Roosevelt’s arsenal, was that monuments were to be “confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected,” but small was not a word that Roosevelt used very often. In northeast Wyoming, west of the Black Hills, a massive igneous formation soars 1,267 feet above the Belle Fourche River. Known to the Lakotas as “Bear Lodge” and to the Kiowas as “Tree Rock,” a white explorer named the monolith “Devils Tower,” and in June 1906, it became the first national monument that President Roosevelt designated.⁵⁰ As with other notable western geologic formations such as Scotts Bluff or Chimney Rock, emigrants and explorers during the nineteenth century gave new English-language names to geological features, appropriating their cultural significance from American Indian tribes, and slowly extending American symbolic hegemony westward.⁵¹ While it is unclear if Roosevelt ever saw Devils Tower up close, before or after its designation as a national monument, he certainly heard stories about the fantastic rock from his fellow cowboys and ranchers in the Dakota Territory and was familiar with its unique stature and scientific value. Moreover, Devils Tower is only fifteen miles away from the headwaters of the Little Missouri River in Crook County, Wyoming, which flows through Theodore Roosevelt National Park today.⁵²

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the passage of the Antiquities Act barely registered any public interest in Roosevelt’s home state of New York, but in the West, newspapers and land

⁴⁷ Collins, *That Damned Cowboy*, 107.

⁴⁸ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 634.

⁴⁹ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 642-644.

⁵⁰ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 631-633.

⁵¹ For more on symbolic imperialism see Sarah Keyes, “Like a Roaring Lion: The Overland Trail as a Sonic Conquest,” *Journal of American History* 96, no. 1 (2009): 19-43.

⁵² Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 633.

developers from Texas to North Dakota took note. The early response was generally positive, with writers “glad that the government has preserved this great natural monument [Devils Tower] for the benefit of posterity.”⁵³ Others reacted more ambivalently, noting the “withdrawal” of public lands from future private purchase, as well as the range and scope of the government’s reach, emphasizing that Devils Tower took up 1,152 acres and that the government had withdrawn 60,776 acres in Arizona for the Petrified Forest.⁵⁴ While in office, Roosevelt proclaimed eighteen national monuments totaling more than a million acres of public land. Today, federal stewardship of western public lands is still a hotly contested issue. Recent events like the standoff between the Bureau of Land Management and Cliven Bundy on April 5, 2014 in southeastern Nevada and the January 2016 takeover of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Oregon are legacies of the original antagonism toward conservation laws enacted during the Roosevelt administration.

Roosevelt’s legislative efforts took place within what historians Ben A. Minter and Stephen J. Pyne described as the pragmatism inherent in late nineteenth and early twentieth century conservation. They argued that viewing conservation during Roosevelt’s presidency in binary terms epitomized by naturalist John Muir’s stance on total and perfect preservation on the one hand, and Gifford Pinchot’s methods for scientific management on the other, obscures the historic context surrounding conservation. For instance, in the same year President Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act, he also accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for helping resolve the Russo-Japanese War, which considerably enlarges the context surrounding his domestic policies by connecting his experiences abroad to his administration’s policies at home.⁵⁵ At the same time, Roosevelt became one of the foremost champions of the Progressive Era, a period defined by scientific rationalism, social reform, and increased industrial, political, and commercial efficiency. In many ways, he oversaw a shift in American culture away from the conservatism of post-Civil War Reconstruction to a hopeful new age when Americans believed that even desolate places like the Badlands, when guided by scientific expertise and the efficient use of resources, might one day turn a profit.⁵⁶ President Roosevelt therefore occupied a middle road in American socio-economics; instead of rejecting market capitalism like socialist Eugene V. Debs, he wanted to make it stronger through progressive, pragmatic, and efficient reforms.

Roosevelt’s penchant for “instant decision” made him a good hunter and cowboy and probably saved his life a few times, and the value he placed upon his independence certainly informed the Antiquities Act, which allowed him to circumvent his recalcitrant Congress. Yet Roosevelt also understood that in government, especially as president, he needed to build coalitions, find friends, and make allies in order to pass truly comprehensive reforms. On May

⁵³ “Big Devil’s Tower,” *Oak Creek Times* (Oak Creek, CO), September 28, 1911, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=OCT19110928.2.34>.

⁵⁴ “To Save Antiquities,” *Eagle Valley Enterprise* (Eagle, CO), February 8, 1907, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=EVE19070208.2.56>.

⁵⁵ Ben A. Minter and Stephen J. Pyne, “Restoring the Narrative of American Environmentalism,” *Restoration Ecology* 21, no. 1 (January 2013): 6.

⁵⁶ Samuel P. Hays, *The Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 2.

13, 1908, Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot called to order the first National Conference on Conservation, better known as the Governors' Conference, at the White House. The event included governors from nearly every state and territory along with three natural resource advisors for each man. In an unprecedented move for a blue-ribbon commission, all nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court attended.⁵⁷ Roosevelt convened the gathering on a stark note.

The occasion for this meeting lies in the fact that the natural resources of our country are in danger of exhaustion if we permit the old wasteful methods of exploiting them longer to continue. The growth of the Nation by leaps and bounds makes one of the most striking and important chapters in the history of the world. Its growth has been due to the rapid development, and alas! The destruction, of our natural resources.⁵⁸

For Roosevelt, it was not a matter of "if" but "when" the United States would be unable to sustain its rapid growth with the accompanying resource exhaustion. The Governors' Conference started a crucial dialogue that led to several states adopting new natural resource management policies. Others demurred, like Montana's governor Edwin C. Norris, who suggested to Pinchot "that there be no more [forest reserves]," because "we have sufficient." Like some other western leaders, Norris chaffed at the federal withdrawal of public land in Montana, especially when juxtaposed with the percentage of public land reserved in eastern states.⁵⁹

The following June, President Roosevelt established the National Conservation Commission, composed of appointed representatives of Congress and relevant executive agencies with Gifford Pinchot as chairman. Roosevelt tasked the commission with compiling an inventory of the nation's natural resources along with management policy recommendations. By August, there were already objections to the commission and especially to Gifford Pinchot's role as chair. Detractors lamented that Roosevelt's unabashed support for his chief forester clouded his judgement and feared that the commission was quickly falling "under the complete domination" of Pinchot and the U.S. Forest Service.⁶⁰ This was not the first time that Americans, including early conservationists, had questioned Pinchot's pragmatic vision of natural resource management and his emphasis on exploitation rather than preservation of western resources. Naturalist John Muir had conspicuously not been invited to the Governors' Conference due to his protestation over Secretary of the Interior James R. Garfield's decision to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite. Muir had appealed to Roosevelt to stop the dam project. However, because the 1906 earthquake and fire that destroyed much of San Francisco had revealed the inadequacy of the city's water supplies, the president ultimately decided to support Pinchot's vision of scientifically managed lands and allow the dam project to go forward.⁶¹ Despite objections to Pinchot's "enthusiasm in forestry matters," the National Conservation Commission worked

⁵⁷ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 770.

⁵⁸ "Governors Cheer Roosevelt's Talk: He Tells them Conservation of All Natural Resources Needs One Coherent Plan," *New York Times*, May 14, 1908, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9B03E0DA1639E333A25757C1A9639C946997D6CF>.

⁵⁹ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 772.

⁶⁰ "Objection to Pinchot," *New York Times*, August 10, 1908, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D01E4D8123EE233A25753C1A96E9C946997D6CF>.

⁶¹ Hays, *Gospel of Efficiency*, 193.

quickly and effectively. By January 1909, it submitted a three-volume report on natural resource management issues to Congress.⁶²

Part of the research conducted by the National Conservation Commission involved sending a group of politicians and conservationists to several European nations to study how they managed their natural resources. Senator Reed Smoot of Utah, chair of the forestry division for the conservation of American natural resources, led the party, along with Congressmen J. Hampton Moore of Pennsylvania and Theodore E. Burton of Ohio. The group visited Germany, France, and Switzerland with “the idea of adapting some of the foreign forestry methods to our own forests, with the view to preventing the ruthless waste of our forests.”⁶³ Smoot learned a lot, and his excitement was palpable as he explained to the *New York Times* how in the Swiss *Silhwald* forest (“one of the best administered forests visited”), the city of Zurich annually profited by \$11.75 per forest-acre while in American forest preserves cities earn less than 10 cents an acre. Smoot applauded the Europeans’ scientific vigor, and with a hint of environmental patriotism, noted that North American trees, like the Weymouth pine, which had been “ruthlessly slain in the White Mountains, also does well there, better than their own native pine.”⁶⁴ Not only were rivers, forests, and soils interconnected, so were transnational ideas about the best ways to protect those resources. Following the trip, Roosevelt appropriated \$50,000 for the National Conservation Commission, noting, “This is a very small sum. I know of no other way in which the appropriation of so small a sum would result in so large a benefit to the whole nation.”⁶⁵

Roosevelt’s political trajectory, from Elkhorn Ranch to the White House, afforded him many opportunities to notice American inefficiency and waste and to correct it with an eye to European successes. The Governors’ Conference and the formation of the National Conservation Commission were important steps in identifying and cataloguing deficiencies and alerting the states to the value of natural resource conservation. Although the immediate issues were domestic, the solutions were ultimately transnational in scope and methodology. Historian Daniel Rogers described the “politics of lag,” or “behindhandedness,” in which the United States as a nation and a people envisioned themselves as being always a step behind their European counterparts. This recasts Rooseveltian conservation in a way that highlights the complexities of the Progressive Era and the connections between natural resource issues worldwide.⁶⁶ This is not to say that Americans were light-years away from accomplishing the feats of other nations, but rather that the United States was simply behind—less efficient in industry, social policies, and resource management—and with smart adoptions of select European traits, it would one day leap ahead in the great race of nations. In this way, Gifford Pinchot’s advocacy of scientific forestry management reflects the uniquely American school of philosophical pragmatism—judging the

⁶² Hays, *Gospel of Efficiency*, 131-132; Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 773.

⁶³ “New Plan to Save National Forests: Senator Smoot to Recommend that they be turned over to States, Cities, and Counties,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1908, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9407E2DC133EE233A25752C3A96E9C946997D6CF>.

⁶⁴ “New Plan to Save National Forests,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1908.

⁶⁵ Henry Gannett, ed., *Report of the National Conservation Commission*, vol. 1. February 1909. Special Message from the President of the United States transmitting a report of the National Conservation Commission (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 8.

⁶⁶ Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 73.

efficacy of an idea or act by how well it works in practice—as well his transatlantic connections. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century conservation relied heavily on transatlantic communication and American pragmatism. The *New York Times* quoted Elihu Root, Roosevelt's friend and secretary of war, as saying, "I feel impressed with the idea that the forty-six sovereign States in the performance of their duties of government are lagging behind the stage of development which other sovereignties of the earth have reached."⁶⁷ Roosevelt's conservation practices thus developed in a dialogue between European precedents and practical American values. "I enjoyed my trip to Europe," Roosevelt wrote at the end of his presidency, "and felt that everywhere there was something to learn—something that we could profit by in the experience of other nations...."⁶⁸

Roosevelt considered the 1908 Governors' Conference a resounding success and decided to follow it by convening another conference on February 18, 1909. This time the goal was organizing the governments of Canada, the United States, and Mexico around the same conservation agenda.⁶⁹ Speaking of this conference of North American nations, the *Washington Post* wrote, "The keynote of the conference was that international streams are affected by cutting forests on either side of the boundary line, and that conservation plans, to be the most practical, must be international."⁷⁰ Coming at the same time as the Panama Canal was cutting rapidly across the Isthmus and the U.S. Navy's Great White Fleet proudly returned to the United States from its successful circumnavigation of the globe, the North American Conference signaled a globalized and triumphant future for natural resource and wildlife conservation.

In many ways, Roosevelt was at the center of this movement, and from the beginning, he recognized the American West's position relative to the rest of the world. In the West, he met American and European hunters who shared a passion for wild game and their haunts. With the Boone and Crockett Club, he edited *Hunting In Many Lands* (1895), which advocated for an international approach to hunting and studying large fauna. Even his recollections of the Spanish-American War were replete with descriptions of birds and trees and crabs. As Roosevelt prepared to embark on a hunting trip to Africa at the end of his political career, Gifford Pinchot attempted to form a World Conservation Congress to meet at The Hague, Netherlands, in September 1909. With fifty-eight countries invited and immediate acceptance from Great Britain, France, and Germany, this would have been the crowning achievement of the Rooseveltian global conservation movement. To conservators' consternation, after only a few weeks in office, incoming President Taft balked and called off the conference before it began.⁷¹

⁶⁷ "Governors Cheer Roosevelt's Talk," *New York Times*, May 14, 1908.

⁶⁸ "Throngs in South Acclaim Roosevelt," *New York Times*, October 8, 1910, accessed April 15, 2106, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9B03E1DB1F39E333A2575BC0A9669D946196D6CF>.

⁶⁹ "Roosevelt Invites Canada and Mexico," *New York Times*, December 28, 1908.

⁷⁰ "Saving of America," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1909.

⁷¹ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 804. Taft felt that Pinchot had overstepped his bounds by calling an international conference. In 1910 Taft dismissed Pinchot from his post as Chief Forester. Many die-hard conservationists like Sir Horace Plunkett, George Bird Grinnell, and Gifford Pinchot thus sought to tarnish Taft's legacy as a conservator.

Conclusion

Roosevelt's interest in preserving nature's bounty for the workingman and the youth of tomorrow continued in different forms after his presidency, but by the end of 1909, Roosevelt was tired of politics and ready for adventure. His answer to this ennui was to seek the same solace he had found in the Dakotas in 1883, this time in the Belgian Congo and the British Sudan as part of a scientific hunting expedition financed by the Smithsonian Institute. This would not be like his former young man's casual foray into bison hunting. With Roosevelt went four tons of salt for preserving animal hides, a Holland & Holland double rifle donated by fifty-six admiring British hunters and conservators, and his twenty-year-old son Kermit Roosevelt.⁷² The participants in the Smithsonian expedition saw Africa as a frontier like the Dakotas in 1883. As historian Monica Rico noted, this trip rejuvenated Roosevelt but also provided Kermit with "the opportunity to experience the therapeutic wildness necessary for successful passage into manhood." Roosevelt viewed Africa as a "white man's country," which he likened to the American West, a place where racial dominance over the native inhabitants justified the creation of game preserves and hunting parks. Imperial officials, noted Rico, "justified such restrictions by arguing that Africans lacked 'sporting instincts' and a 'sense of honour' and that indigenous Africans could be civilized only if they were prevented from engaging in subsistence hunting, compelling them to turn to wage labor and farming."⁷³ White imperialists' views of native Africans were thus similar to white Americans' views of American Indians. In both cases, whites, including Roosevelt, ignored the fact that indigenous peoples had been using and living on the land for millennia in ways that gave them a deeper understanding of the landscape and knowledge of nature than many whites who were newly arrived on the scene.⁷⁴ Upon his return to the United States in 1910, Roosevelt happily noted that he had "enjoyed my trip to Africa—I enjoyed it more than the lions did." He simultaneously defended his hunting trip from critics, calling the expedition an act of science and conservation despite the fact that participants killed or trapped approximately 11,400 animals during their time in Africa.⁷⁵

Roosevelt conducted his Africa expedition nearly thirty years after he first traveled to Medora, North Dakota, but the trip came from a similar motivation despite Roosevelt being a bit older and more experienced. Most importantly, the African expedition reveals how both American hunting and conservation were enmeshed in overarching late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century racialized narratives, which accorded some people the right and the duty to protect and use the land in ways they considered to be the most efficient, most responsible, and least harmful. In almost every scenario, this meant that Americans and Western Europeans could rationalize their dominion over indigenous peoples by emphasizing the importance of the landscape to human social, political, and gender constructions. In these "pristine" environments, whether in Africa or along the Little Missouri River, control over the land conferred healing benefits and coming-of-age experiences for white men, but also provided the material base for continued industrial exploitation of both landscapes and peoples. Thus, Rooseveltian

⁷² George A. Cevasco and Richard P. Harmond, *Modern American Environmentalists: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 444.

⁷³ Rico, *Nature's Noblemen*, 18, 194-195.

⁷⁴ Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 243. See also Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

⁷⁵ "Throngs in South Acclaim Roosevelt," *New York Times*, October 8, 1910.

conservation is much larger than Elkhorn Ranch or the Antiquities Act. It is a window into an era of scientific racism and imperial ambition, of natural resource protection and capitalistic exploitation. It tells the story about how men like Roosevelt saw the world in global terms that acknowledged the artificiality of national borders.

Roosevelt never stopped crusading for the protection of the world's natural resources. After his expedition to Africa, he scheduled another scientific trip in 1913-1914 to Brazil and the Amazon, where he met prominent South American scientists and collected bird and mammal specimens for the New York Museum of Natural History. Until his sudden death in 1919, he railed against those who would defile the land and in turn harm the creatures, including humans, which depended upon it for survival and definition. By the turn of the century, the harsh environmental conditions in the Dakota Territory that destroyed Roosevelt's ranching operation in 1887 were a distant memory, and thousands of Americans and Europeans began to see the land that Roosevelt so loved as a place where they could perhaps begin anew. Potential settlers were likely emboldened by Roosevelt's frequent assertion that conservation projects ultimately benefited farmers the most. As Roosevelt said in a 1910 speech to farmers, "We are now trying to preserve...the waters and the forests, and we are doing this primarily as a means of adding to the fertility of the soil..."⁷⁶ Curtailing the devastation wrought by the oil, gas, railroad, and timber industries saved the rivers and streams from the harmful effects of contamination and soil run-off. This enabled the average farm to produce larger yields and better profits with a promise of a sustainable agricultural future. For these new farmers and ranchers, the jagged buttes, rushing streams, and rolling plains of the Dakotas would become the new center of an event more interconnected world.

⁷⁶ "Roosevelt to the Farmers: Betterment of Rural Life One of the Nation's Great Needs," *New York Times*, August 24, 1910, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9A06E7D8173AE733A25757C2A96E9C946196D6CF>.

Chapter 5

The Homesteading Era: An Agrarian Society in the Badlands, 1898-1937

Clara Keyt

In the early twentieth century, dry-farming and fenced ranching reshaped the landscape of the North Dakota Badlands. Homesteaders in earlier decades settled on the edges of the Great Plains in the eastern halves of Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, where water was dependable and rail lines accessible. However, changes in agricultural practices, rising food and property costs in the East, and revisions to the 1862 Homestead Act brought hundreds of thousands of homesteaders onto the interior of the Great Plains between 1898 and 1919. It was, as historian Douglas Hurt explained, “the last opportunity to participate in the great drama of western expansion.”¹ The resulting twenty-year wheat and livestock bonanza restructured western North Dakota into an agrarian landscape. Homesteaders overlaid the Badlands with an industrialized agricultural infrastructure, replaced diverse biota with single-species crop fields, and reorganized plant and animal communities in fenced pastures. Little material culture of the homesteading era remained, however, after Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park was created in 1947, leaving the soil, with its attendant vegetation and wildlife, as the legacy of a brief vision of homesteading in the arid Badlands.

The federal government and railroad companies had long promoted agrarianism and principles of land ownership, resource extraction, and participation in free-market capitalism as markers of American civilization. New federal legislation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries directly spoke to the agrarian vision of land use. Homestead claims boomed along the eastern edge of the Great Plains after the passage of the 1862 Homestead Act. North Dakota’s first wave of homesteaders settled the eastern half of the state between 1871 and the late 1880s. The towns of Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Bismarck grew rapidly as the Great Northern Railroad extended its lines from Minot to Williston and Fargo by 1889. However, the western half of North Dakota and most of the interior of the Plains region remained formidable and unconducive to white settlement and its accompanying agrarian values.

With the confinement of American Indians to reservations and with the national economic recovery from the recession of the 1890s, a second homesteading wave began. Homesteaders, railroad advertisers, and the federal government held new visions for the interior Plains. Federal intervention, advances in farming equipment and tillage practices, rising food costs, and new marketing campaigns made the interior Plains attractive as an agricultural region. The 1902 Reclamation Act sanctioned federal development in arid lands. In his 1902 speech to Congress, Theodore Roosevelt declared his belief in molding landscapes to agrarian values

¹ Douglas Hurt, *The Big Empty: The Great Plains in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 1.

through channeling and damming western waterways to irrigate arid and semi-arid farmlands.² North Dakota was one of the sixteen states originally identified in the Reclamation Act for project locations.³ The Lower Yellowstone Project along the Montana-North Dakota border and the Buford-Trenton Project in Williams County were among the first projects developed in the state and brought settlers even closer to the area that would become Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Congress expanded on the 1862 Homestead Act over several decades, each time enticing white settlers into the last “frontier,” the western half of the Plains states. Homesteaders eagerly took advantage of the 1904 Kincaid Act, filing claims in the Sand Hills of western Nebraska. The 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act enticed settlers with homesteads of 320 acres on non-irrigated dry-lands. By 1913, settlers had filed eleven million claims, most located in the interior of what people once called “the Great American Desert.” Three years later, Congress encouraged families to remain on the Plains through the passage of the Stock Raising Homestead Act. This act, perhaps in recognition that the problem of aridity was not quite conquered, allowed homestead claims to include ranching activities rather than solely farming.⁴ With these changes, the second wave of homesteading gathered steam, expanding across the Dakotas, the Sand Hills of western Nebraska, and other regions of the Plains.

To encourage migration to these newly attractive areas, banks, grain elevator operators, railroads, and the states themselves created multi-faceted and sometimes deceptive marketing campaigns. Marketing North Dakota as “a garden of Eden” and a “northern banana belt” seemed plausible to some would-be settlers within the framework of newly developed dry-farming methods. Practiced in parts of California and Utah by the 1860s, dry-farming prompted conservation of moisture in arid, climatically harsh lands with low rainfall and little access to waterways. Railroad companies, banks, states, and the federal government used it as a marketing tool to sell the interior Plains during the early twentieth century. Many people of the era also subscribed to the idea that “rain follows the plow,” that is, that providentially or otherwise, farming would alter precipitation patterns to bring more rainfall.

Lured by scientific and pseudo-scientific farming, more than a decade of above-average rainfall, and the search for middle-class stability, a quarter million settlers poured into western North Dakota between 1898 and 1915. Claimants hailed from New England and the Midwest, particularly Minnesota and Wisconsin. First- and second-generation Norwegian immigrants and German peasants from Russia comprised the largest groups settling in the arid high plains of

² Theodore Roosevelt, “Message of The President of The United States Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress,” 1902, Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/en/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o284538>.

³ Shanna Shervheim, “The Arid West—The Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902,” June 17, 2013, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University Blog, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Blog/2013/June/17-The-Newlands-Reclamation-Act-of-1902.aspx>.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, “Explore the Homestead Timeline,” Homestead Act General Land Office Webpage, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Law_Enforcement/nlcs/education__interpretation/homestead_graphics0.Par.57736.File.dat/Expanded%20Homestead%20Timeline%20final.pdf.

McKenzie and Billings Counties. Germans from south Russia, the Danube Delta, Baden, Bavaria, and Wurttemberg responded to the Great Northern Railroad's deliberate recruitment of "sturdy farmers" able to work "unusable land."⁵ The railroad ran 5,000 miles of track between St. Paul and Seattle, selling acreage along the route. Purchase of railroad lands gave Germans an escape from military impressment and the grueling tenant-farmer culture near the Black Sea's windy, high steppes.⁶ Railroad lands also provided settlers with ready access to urban markets. The Golden Valley Land and Cattle Company, a major landowner in western North Dakota, also recruited foreign settlers, although its clients were typically from nearby states. The company moved seventeen German immigrants from St. Cloud, Minnesota onto Badlands farms in and near what would later become the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.⁷

Railroad and land company agents had less success reaching Norwegians and those of Norwegian descent, because these people used their own networks to facilitate migration to the Plains. Seeking relief from an over-populated and over-farmed countryside in the home country and in the American Midwest, these people exchanged letters between Norway and Norwegian enclaves in Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and the lumber camps of Minnesota, describing Plains lands that might provide some recovery from the severe economic depression of the 1890s. Family and friends read and discussed these letters. This "network advertising" also appeared in newspapers in both Norway and America. Norwegian enclaves were tight-knit and most Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans were literate even in the Old Country, so "Dakota fever" spread rapidly.⁸



Roadside historic marker on U.S. 85, just south of entrance to North Unit, memorializes Ukrainian settlers. 2016.
Photo by Jared Orsi.

⁵ Everett C. Albers and D. Jerome Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was: The North Dakota Frontier Experience, Book Two: Norwegian Homesteaders* (Fessenden: The Grass Roots Press, 1998), viii.

⁶ Albers and Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was, Book Two*, viii; John C. Hudson, "Migration to an American Frontier," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66, no. 2 (June 1976): 242–265.

⁷ Geoff Cunfer, *On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 24.

⁸ Hudson, "Migration to an American Frontier," 242–265.

Ukrainians immigrated to the Badlands as well. During the homestead era, Ukraine experienced a diaspora of its citizens due to overpopulation, low wages, religious persecution, and military conscription. Of the 264,000 Ukrainians who left their home country, approximately 1,200 came to North Dakota. Most settled in or near the now-defunct town of Ukraina (four miles northeast of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's South Unit), in Gorham (thirty-nine miles northeast of the South Unit), in Belfield, and in townships 148-98, 141-99, 142-98, 142-99, 142-100, 143-98, 143-99, 143-100, 144-98, and 144-99 along the eastern edges of what would become Theodore Roosevelt National Park.⁹ As a result, the population of Billings County rose from 975 people in 1900 to 10,186 only ten years later.¹⁰ Ukrainians John and Anna Ewoniuk were among the many settlers who came to the area and drew on their previous experiences farming the arid, windy, steppes near the Black Sea, an environment similar to western North Dakota.¹¹

Formal and network advertising helped spread the second homestead boom in North Dakota. The first boom had occurred between 1871 and 1886, when children of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin farmers migrated to arable eastern North Dakota and established wheat farms near Fargo, Jamestown, and Bismarck. By the 1890s, with a 1,000 percent increase in North Dakota's white population and farmlands in the Midwest already claimed, the settlers' children lacked land and capital. This next generation migrated to the Badlands between 1898 and 1919, joining Norwegian, German-Russian, and Ukrainian farmers on the Little Missouri Plateau.¹² The sheer volume of recorded homesteads in McKenzie, Billings, and Golden Counties, more than 650 by 1934, demonstrates that settlers viewed landownership as an attainable goal and a symbol of upward mobility.¹³ These homesteaders were different from previous generations. They came by train rather than wagon, signaling their participation in the industrial age. However, industrial inventions did not merely provide a way to the Plains. Agrarianism and home ownership were only possible in western North Dakota with the additional promise of continued technological, scientific, and governmental support.

Agriculture in western North Dakota, especially wheat farming, got an enormous boost during the First World War, 1914-1918. As Russians and other European men left their farm

⁹ William C. Sherman, and Playford V. Thorson, eds., et al., *Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History*, 2nd printing, rev. and corrected (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies at North Dakota State University in cooperation with the North Dakota Humanities Council and the University of North Dakota, 1988), 261, 268-271, 276, 306.

¹⁰ Elwyn Burns Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 283.

¹¹ Billings County Historical Society, *Echoing Trails: Billings County History* (Medora: Billings County Historical Society, 1979), 123.

¹² Albers and Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was, Book Two*, viii; Everett C. Albers and D. Jerome Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was: The North Dakota Frontier Experience, Book One: The Sod-busters* (Fessenden: The Grass Roots Press, 1996), 21.

¹³ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan—Cultural Component, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota" (Rocky Mountain Region: National Park Service, September 1986), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and North Dakota State Historical Society, "Roosevelt Regional Park, Site 2, South Area, Razing Old Ranch Buildings, Job 303, Form 7-713," [map], drawn and designed by H. Glass, August 12, 1940, 1:3000, prepared and approved by Russell Reid, North Dakota State Historical Society, August 16, 1940, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library. See also Tweton's map of western North Dakota showing Norwegian property acquisition: Albers and Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was, Book Two*.

fields for battlefields, many acres across the combatant nations lay idle. Production fell. Prices soared. Farmers in other parts of the world, particularly Australia, Argentina, and the North American Plains, including North Dakota, stepped in to fill the production void and take advantage of the wartime price inflation. Markets would soon collapse, however, after the fighting ended.

Homesteaders envisioned the Badlands as a landscape on which to overlay the agrarian ideal. For thirty years, homesteaders intensely manipulated the natural ecosystem for human profit. Nature on the arid high plains seemed to support these visions of agrarianism. The year 1898 began nearly twenty years of above-average rainfall, rising wheat and beef prices, easier travel, and scientific agricultural developments such as dry-farming and mechanized equipment.¹⁴ What homesteaders left during their thirty-year tenure in western North Dakota—physical impressions of dwellings and outbuildings, traces of roads, commercial agricultural infrastructure, and altered vegetative and animal communities—remain as historical evidence of an agrarian empire.

Home Building in the Badlands

In the Badlands, the basic unit of human shelter did not differ substantially from other Plains dwellings. However, home building on the arid Plains created changes in the Badlands' natural environment that remain as evidence of settlers' visions of civilization. Access to modern products occurred much more rapidly during settlement of the Plains interior than during previous settlement booms. To show improvements on their claims, to meet the necessity of shelter, and to compensate for lack of wood, homesteaders quickly built temporary sod homes and dugouts. Often, the two styles were combined, with interior walls plastered with straw and prairie grass, mixed with mud, and then lime-washed. As late as 1974, the remains of two dugouts were visible in Section 4 of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's North Unit.¹⁵

Old-world experiences and socio-economic standing dictated the kind of homes that immigrants built. When Norwegians upgraded, they tended to use sod and dugout homes as temporary shelters before quickly moving into permanent frame homes. About 85 percent German-Russians also built sod-and-dugout homes, but higher rates of poverty forced them to remain there for longer before upgrading. Where Norwegian families tended to assimilate politically and socially, Germans from Russia retained their culturally cohesive kinship networks. Often, these homesteaders continued constructing *einheitshauser*, or human dwellings with attached animal barns or sheds. Old-world architecture, however, required modification on the Dakota prairie. Neither sun-dried clay nor tall-grass straw was readily available, so these homesteaders created a mixture of sandstone, dried manure, and native sod. They also built

¹⁴ Hurt, *Big Empty*, 8-9; Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 3; Albers and Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was, Book One*, iii.

¹⁵ U.S. Geological Survey, "Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota (North Unit)" [map], 1974, 1:24,000, 7.5 Minute Series, Reston, VA: United States Department of the Interior, USGS, 1974, with markings of homesteads by North Unit backcountry ranger John Heiser and information on homestead sections supplied by Syverson (Watford City), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

[illegible]

As soon as possible, many homesteaders upgraded to frame homes with the help of mail-order pattern books and pre-cut lumber. Nearly every fledging town along the railroad had a lumberyard, and Sears & Roebuck and Montgomery Ward sent thousands of pattern books and catalogues to Plains residents. Railroads delivered pre-fabricated, pre-cut materials to towns, and settlers hauled these materials by truck or wagon to homes far from urban centers.¹⁸ Architectural styles throughout the Badlands mimicked the national trend of mail-order catalogue home designs, balloon-frame housing, and “locale-free” styles. Occasionally, free classic Queen Anne homes dotted the homesteads, although folk vernacular or I-homes were more common, as owners could easily add on to the structures using lumber from the railroad yards or by harvesting timber from nearby draws and shelterbelts. Norwegians in particular were skilled carpenters, and accustomed to constructing homes out of wood. Of the 125,000

¹⁸ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 1991), 151-159, 178-183.

Norwegians living in western North Dakota during the homestead era, many traveled up to seventy-five miles to cut pine, cottonwoods, American elm, and pine trees in the wooded draws and shelterbelts of what would become Theodore Roosevelt National Park.¹⁹ Others built wood-framed tarpaper shacks using scavenged lumber. Even those living outside the future park altered the area's natural resources. Within a decade, settlers had largely cleared the draws and riparian areas of timber.



The house at Peaceful Valley Ranch combined 1882 log construction of early settlement period with a later one-and-half story frame addition. The structure was remodeled again in 1947. 2013. Photo by Public Lands History Center.

In the 1930s, when the land became a state park, the federal government razed homestead dwellings and outbuildings as part of New Deal programs to support employment and provide other relief to state and local governments. Thus, today these homesteading sites no longer retain integrity. However, wells and the foundations of houses and outbuildings may still be extant at some homestead sites.²⁰

¹⁹ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 284; Albers and Tweton, eds., *The Way It Was, Book Two*, viii; Rick B. Hopkins, J. Frank Cassel, and Ardell J. Bjugstad, *Relationships between Breeding Birds and Vegetation in Four Woodland Types of the Little Missouri National Grasslands* (Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, 1986); Loren D. Potter, "North Dakota's Heritage of Pine," *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* 19, no. 3 (1952): 157-166; A. C. Huidekoper, *My Experiences and Investment in the Badlands of Dakota and Some of the Men I Met There* (Baltimore: Wirth Brothers, 1947), 23.

²⁰ The author is unaware of documentation about extant wells or building foundations at homestead sites within Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Vegetative changes, not structural remains, are the most prominent surviving

The most substantial surviving cultural resource of these former homestead sites is the vegetative changes on the landscape. Most homesteaders left open fields of disturbed soils when they constructed dugouts, sod homes, and rammed earth dwellings. The frame homes settlers later built resulted in additional large swaths of exposed soils. The earth around homes typically remained bare of ground cover for years. Women often attempted to transform the yards around their homes. Norwegian women in particular, comprising about 20 percent of all homesteaders in the Badlands, gardened and planted cottonwoods, willows, and shrubbery to create windbreaks and beautify their property, imposing eastern and old-world visions of domestication onto an arid land. In addition to deliberate plantings, newly disturbed earth often became hard-packed with no vegetation or sprouted non-native species. Changes in vegetative communities on homesteading sites are historic cultural artifacts and document the evidence of homesteading in western North Dakota.

Survival on the Homestead: Extracting Coal and Water

Necessity demanded that homesteaders concern themselves with immediately locating sources of heat and water. When they arrived in the Badlands, settlers found an abundance of lignite, a soft, low-ranking, black surface or sub-surface coal found in shale rock formations. Western North Dakota contains 351 billion tons of lignite coal, the single largest lignite deposit in the world.²¹ Homesteaders were undoubtedly overjoyed to find such an abundant natural resource. Their mining of surface and sub-surface coal veins in what became Theodore Roosevelt National Park can be interpreted within the nation's vision of unmitigated resource extraction and an example of the early development of fossil fuels on which American life and economy have relied since.

As homesteaders filtered through Midwestern cities and farms on their way to Billings and McKenzie Counties, they gathered knowledge of coal processing. Hard figures are not available to illustrate the percentage of homesteaders with experience in coal mining in the East or in Europe. However, by 1890, ten years before the homestead boom in western North Dakota, the U.S. was the world's leading producer of coal. Given the magnitude of recent immigrants' dependence on employment in the extractive and production industries in the mid-Atlantic and Midwest, it is likely that some homesteaders were at least familiar with coal mining processes. In addition to the deep shaft mining typically associated with coal extraction, the United States' coalfields also used drift and slope mining, which involved following a coal vein from a surface outcropping at an angle into a hillside or the ground.²²

evidence of homestead-era cultural resources in the park. However, site visits to homestead locations and aerial photography may provide evidence of structural remains and enable documentation of surviving resources.

²¹ North Dakota Geological Survey, "Mineral Resources of North Dakota: Coal," accessed April 15, 2016, https://www.dmr.nd.gov/ndgs/mineral/nd_coalnew.asp.

²² Richard P. Mulcahy, "An Essay from 19th Century U.S. Newspapers Database: Mining and Extraction," 2, Gale Digital Collections, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.galegroup.com/pdf/whitepapers/gdc/Mining_whtppr.pdf.



Exposed coal vein in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi

Western North Dakota and the area around what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park contained many coal mines used by ranchers and settlers. In the 1880s, Theodore Roosevelt employed men to dig out a coal seam in the northwest corner of his ranch. Roosevelt also constructed a mine three or four miles south of Chimney Butte. After he abandoned his ranch, it is possible that homesteaders used these old coal seams. Other coal seams now within park boundaries include one about 4,500 feet west of Sheep Creek, one on Buck Hill, one north of Black Creek on the east side of the Little Missouri River, and another in Township 140-10 1-3 in the gully on the south side of the park road.²³ By 1920, there were 250 coal mines operating in North Dakota. Many of the surface mines were called “wagon mines,” because settlers often

²³ Dennis L. Toom and Michael A. Jackson, *Elkhorn Ranch Site (32B18): 2009 Precision Mapping Project, Elkhorn Ranch Unit, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Billings County, North Dakota: Final Report* (Lincoln, NE: Midwest Archeological Center, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2010), 21-22; Robert F. Biek and Mark A. Gonzalez, *The Geology of Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Billings and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota* (Bismarck: North Dakota Geological Survey, 2001), 8; *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Natural Resource Condition Assessment. Natural Resource Report NPS/THRO/NRR—2014/776* (Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, February 2014), 248.

filled their own wagons with coal they purchased on site.²⁴ The *Dickinson Press* noted that the Great Northern Railroad and settlers along its lines used lignite coal for heating and power. Indeed, the railroad's east-west line was never more than fifteen to eighteen miles from these beds.²⁵ The dug-out coal veins along Paddock Creek, used by the Halliday family, and on T. E. McGregor's homestead (NE ¼ NW 1/4 -12-148-100) illustrate the blending of acquired eastern knowledge with western needs. Relatively inexpensive access to an abundance of lignite coal made homesteading possible.

Even with above-average rainfall for the first few years of the second homesteading boom, locating water for human and livestock use was a priority for homesteaders. Homesteaders attempted a number of hand-dug wells in the Badlands, but with the typical depth to water of 400 to 600 feet, most settlers preferred to haul water from artesian wells, seeps, or springs, when they could be found. There are ten documented developed springs and fifteen flowing wells in what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and many more remain un-inventoried.²⁶ Artesian wells are located on a number of homestead sites in the park. The North Unit includes Macdal, Hagan (Section 22), Overlook (Section 28W), Stevens (Section 28E) and Achenbach Springs (Section 3), and an unnamed spring near Tom Higgins' homestead (Section 6).²⁷ The South Unit contains multiple water sources used by homesteaders, including the Halliday and Rasmussen (Cottonwood Campground) wells.²⁸ Other homesteaders in this area, such as the Boicourts and Eckblums, found free-flowing springs and seeps, including Big Plateau Springs (Section 2, T140N, R102W) and Sheep Butte Springs (Section 12, T140N, R101W).²⁹

The ultimate vision of these new settlers, however, was not merely survival, but the implementation of a commercial agricultural economy. Federal legislation, railroad business practices, and the grain and beef economies reshaped settlers' perceptions and ultimately the land

²⁴ North Dakota Geological Survey, "Mineral Resources of North Dakota: Coal."

²⁵ A. G. Leonard and Carl D. Smith, "The Sentinel Butte Lignite Field, North Dakota and Montana," in *Contributions to Economic Geology, 1907, Part II: Coal and Lignite*, ed. Marius R. Campbell, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, United States Geological Survey Bulletin 341 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), accessed April 15, 2016, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/bul/0341a/report.pdf>.

²⁶ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," (National Park Service: Rocky Mountain Region, 1994), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²⁷ U.S. Geological Survey, "Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota (North Unit)."

²⁸ "Environmental Study Area: Halliday Wells," n.d., Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/en/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o273543>; "Report of Cultural Resource inventory, Proposed Project Areas, by John Taylor, Park Archeologist, April 2014," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; "Assessment of Effect Form, Cultural Resources Survey in Proposed Park Areas, John Taylor, Park Archeologist," "Section 106 Compliance 1990" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²⁹ Letter, Herman Louis, Senior Project Assistant, November 2, 1934, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Ann Emmons, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, E-29, in "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; "Assessment of Effect Form and Map Attachment to Memorandum, Richard Strait, Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Rocky Mountain Region, to Superintendent, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Received January 22, 1988," "Section 106 Compliance, 1987" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park"; Physical Improvements Map – Mission 66, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

itself into a microcosm of the national surge toward industrialized agriculture. Similar to the boom and bust of the earlier open range ranching period, commercial infrastructure expanded, land owners embraced inflated visions of agrarianism, over-farming ensued (especially during the first world war), and prosperity waned as natural conditions and glutted postwar international grain markets refused to accommodate their visions. Between the 1890s and 1930s homesteaders' relationship with the land introduced vegetative, environmental, and animal changes in the Badlands that remain evident in Theodore Roosevelt National Park today.

The Great Plow-Up

Homesteaders in the 1890s believed in the fertility of the land and that it would support major cash crops, despite indications that the Plains climate did not always support such a belief. Approximately 43,000 acres of the future Theodore Roosevelt National Park, amounting to 60 percent of its land, was upland prairie. Perhaps the flatness of the prairie fostered belief that the soil was the region's most abundant natural resource. Abundant the soil might have been, but whether it could support intensive cash crop farming was another matter. Theodore Roosevelt had declared ten years earlier that the Badlands were "wholly unfit for agricultural purposes." In the ten-year period between 1890 and 1900, farmers reported only four good crop seasons in the region.³⁰ Settlers moved to the Badlands to farm, but agricultural infrastructure depended on the use of draft animals and pastured cattle. Even with modern machinery, better yields, and steady irrigation, the short summers, harsh winters and dry, rocky soils allowed settlers to till for grains only one-third of the land that would become Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Fully two-thirds of the Great Plains, and three-fourths of western North Dakota, was converted pasture for cattle during the homestead era.³¹ Cattle inside fenced pastures acted as a steady supply of food and capital and temporarily stabilized visions of farming in the Badlands.

At the dawn of the new century, however, nature, the federal government, technology, and business seemed to smile on the homesteaders. Wheat farmers on the Plains needed about twenty inches of rain for their crops, although western North Dakota averaged only fifteen annually in the decades prior to the second homesteading boom. Billings County recorded twenty inches in 1906, and the number of homestead claims there jumped to 1,400 in June of that year. For the next decade, rainfall remained at twenty inches annually and homestead claims numbered over 10,000.³² Agricultural science also seemed to defy Roosevelt's earlier claim. The Northern Pacific Railroad and the Golden Valley Land and Cattle Company, the primary businesses that lured homesteaders to the area, sponsored dry-farming workshops across western North Dakota and neighboring states between 1907 and 1916. Dry-farming advocates promoted various methods, but the Great Northern Railroad demonstration car showed deep plowing by sub-soilers in the spring and fall and dust mulching to prevent percolation. Extension programs promoted the use of new, scientifically developed, drought-resistant cereal grains, such as winter wheat, and foraging crops. The newly created Bureau of Reclamation, established under the National Reclamation Act of 1902, accelerated homesteaders' access to a steady water supply, and the

³⁰ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 236.

³¹ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 19.

³² Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 22.

Insect Control Act of 1905 encouraged healthy plant growth.³³ In 1909 and 1910, Congress enlarged the Homestead Act to 320 acres to promote dry-farming methods.³⁴ With national prices for wheat averaging fifty to sixty cents per bushel, and an expected twenty-eight to thirty bushels per acre, the Badlands appeared to be an affordable farmer's paradise.

Agricultural historian Geoff Cunfer writes that "farming is the most direct, extensive, and sustained interaction between human beings and the native world."³⁵ Draft animals and mechanized farm equipment created an agricultural infrastructure that left a legacy of this interaction that is still visible in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The combination of industrialization and livestock gave North Dakota the distinction of having the largest farms in the nation. For example, in Grassy Butte, McKenzie County, Katherine McKenzie acquired her first 160-acreage claim in 1914 and slowly increased her ownership to 640 acres by 1926. Most of her land, 520 acres situated directly between what would become the North and South Units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, was pasture for her twenty-five cattle and draft horses. She planted the remaining acreage in barley, corn, wheat, and oats.³⁶ After the land itself, draft animals and tractors were Badlands farmers' most expensive and time-consuming investments. By the end of World War I, landowners managed four and a half million domesticated horses on farmlands in the Great Plains, with the average Badlands farm keeping between three and nine horses.³⁷ When breaking sod, horses needed more than three pounds of concentrated feed (corn or oats) daily and over fourteen pounds of roughage (hay, prairie grass, alfalfa or clover).³⁸

Settlers in the Badlands quickly learned which of their lands were best suited for wheat, which for feed crops such as oats and barley, and which for grazing cattle. Climate, environment, and market considerations guided the spatial distribution of crop selection and diversity in land use. Rocky hillsides sustained cattle rather than wheat, and all livestock needed clover or alfalfa for feed. Only after satisfying livestock and the environmental demands of the land could farmers participate in the wheat boom of the 1910s. While more than 265 million acres of the Plains never underwent a plow, the one-third that was cultivated led to a bonanza of commercial food products.³⁹

The shift from draft animals to mechanized farm equipment, primarily steam and then gasoline-powered engine tractors and threshers, ultimately fulfilled eastern visions of agricultural life in the Badlands. Mechanization created high expectations of better yields, bumper crops, and quicker planting time, and hastened the declining use of draft animals such as mules and horses. The first commercial tractors plowed the edges of the Plains in 1902, and steam-powered engines

³³ Theodore Roosevelt Centennial Commission, "1858-1958 Theodore Roosevelt and American Agriculture," 3, 1958 Theodore Roosevelt Centennial Symposium, Dickinson State University, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Digital Library, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/en/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o275772>.

³⁴ Michael J. Grant, "Dryland Farming," in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 42.

³⁵ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 3.

³⁶ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 74.

³⁷ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 46.

³⁸ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 114.

³⁹ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 16-17.

made their way to Sentinel Butte, seventeen miles west of the future Theodore Roosevelt National Park, by 1914. The expense of tractors initially limited their use, but at the start of World War I, soaring wartime wheat prices, local co-ops, and competition evened out tractor prices to \$1,500 each. By 1918, the price was \$835 for a mid-size tractor. Large farms tended to mechanize faster, and North Dakota had the largest farms in the nation at the time.⁴⁰ Internal combustion gas engine tractors and threshing machines soon arrived on these farms as well.

Thanks to new inventions, farmers plowed up most of the North Plains in less than thirty years, whereas it took Southern Plains farmers over sixty years using older technology. To offset expenses, Badlands farmers often used co-op equipment, which enabled them to plow thirty-five to forty acres per day, rather than the usual five to seven using a horse.⁴¹ Falling tractor prices, cheap land, new wheat varieties, high market prices, and steady rainfall created unprecedented profits on the Northern Plains. By 1920, settlers had planted one hundred million acres on the Great Plains, including approximately one-third of what became Theodore Roosevelt National Park, to single-species crops. Wheat was king in North Dakota in 1915, with the state producing 150 million bushels in that year alone.⁴² By the end of the homesteading era in the late 1920s, wheat constituted 49 percent of all harvested crops in the Badlands. In 1933, at the height of the Dust Bowl and four years into the Great Depression, the harvested acreage of wheat rose to 70 percent, due to its suitability for dry-farming. By 1920, 26,000 acres, or 34 percent of McKenzie County, was under cultivation.⁴³ The number of the county's 1,000-acre or larger farms increased from eight in 1910 to one-hundred-ninety six in 1920, while in Billings County, the number of 1,000-acre or larger farms increased from thirty-eight to ninety-three over the same period.⁴⁴ The September 1908 issue of *North Dakota* magazine reported 5,472 acres of wheat, 8,383 acres of oats, and 8,315 acres of flax harvested in Billings County that year.⁴⁵ By 1935, more than 20 percent of Billings County was under wheat cultivation.⁴⁶ Eventually, nine million acres of Badlands prairie, including acreage in what became the North and South Units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, were cultivated for wheat, hay, oats, alfalfa, and barley.⁴⁷ High use of tractor ownership facilitated North Dakota's national lead in wheat production, just ahead of Kansas. McKenzie and Billings Counties' tractor ownership rates were 0.1 to 0.5 tractors per square mile in 1925. Five years later, McKenzie County jumped to 0.5 to 1.0 tractor per square mile. In 1930, North Dakota and Kansas led nation in tractor ownership at 1.0 machine per square mile. While some landowners reverted to draft animals during the Great Depression, mechanized farming increased in the Badlands. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of

⁴⁰ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 120-121, 126.

⁴¹ Hurt, *Big Empty*, 8-9.

⁴² State Historical Society of North Dakota, "Farms in North Dakota: A Historic Context" (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2014), 29, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://history.nd.gov/hp/PDFinfo/Farms-in-North-Dakota-Part1.pdf>.

⁴³ Max J. Edwards and J. Kenneth Ableiter, *Soil Survey, McKenzie County, North Dakota*, U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, Soil Survey, Series 1933, no. 37 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 15.

⁴⁴ Alva H. Benton, "Large Land Holdings in North Dakota," *Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 1, no. 4 (October 1925): 411.

⁴⁵ Joseph L. Gavett, *North Dakota Counties: Towns and Peoples. Part III* (Seaside, OR: Watchmaker Publishing, 2008).

⁴⁶ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 100.

⁴⁷ Lena Halliday, interview, August 19, 1970, by unidentified interviewer, transcribed by June M. Schwindt, March 23, 1988, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library, 8; Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 86.

1934 provided funding for gasoline-run equipment, and by 1940, 300,000 tractors tilled the Great Plains.⁴⁸ However, even as Badlands farmers shifted to gasoline-powered equipment, they retained draft animals for specific tasks and continued to grow feed crops, with at least half of farmers' fields still growing roughage for horses.⁴⁹

The extent of large-scale farming in the region and the number of large-acreage farms in McKenzie and Billings Counties warrants the efforts to identify specific former crop fields within Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The construction of five granaries and ten barns on land now inside park boundaries indicates historic cropland productivity in the Badlands, made possible by the shift to capital-intensive farming. Although the Civilian Conservation Corps removed these physical resources in the 1930s, their former sites may provide extant foundations or changed vegetative landscapes for interpretation.⁵⁰

Individual tenacity, regional boosterism, and industrialization transformed western North Dakota from open ranges to fenced homesteads in less than thirty years, and fostered the conviction that humans could make the Plains work for them. However, the harsh climate and landscape destined this bonanza to be nearly as brief as the era of open range ranching. As historian Geoff Cunfer explains, the introduction of fenced cattle, draft horses, and then farm machinery created "a temporary equilibrium...an accommodation between the desires of people and the forces of non-human parties."⁵¹ This twenty-year period in farming and fenced ranching created an impermanent balance that gave Billings and McKenzie Counties a reputation as an affordable farmer's paradise.⁵² The farms in these counties grew even larger than those in the eastern part of the state. However, as Cunfer further argues, "This sustainability [in land-use] can only mean, at best, a temporary equilibrium."⁵³

Altered Plant Communities

As homesteaders built homes, plowed up sod for crops, fenced land for cattle grazing, and used springs, seeps and wells for themselves and their animals, they reorganized plant

⁴⁸ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 247; Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 131, 136.

⁴⁹ Edwards and Ableiter, *Soil Survey, McKenzie County, North Dakota*, 15.

⁵⁰ Job Application form for nursery adjacent to Peaceful Valley Service & Control Area, South Roosevelt Regional Park, approved by Sgd. Walter E. Clarke, April 7, 1941, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, NPS, CCC and ERA, at North Dakota State Historical Society, State Agency Records, #30258 State Parks, Theodore Roosevelt State Park Collection, Box 3, File 1; Job Application form, justification form, and Job Completion Record for razing of old ranch buildings at old ranch sites in the South Area, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, application form approved by Sgd. Walter E. Clarke, August 19, 1940, job completion report approved February 13, 1941, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, NPS, CCC and ERA, at North Dakota State Historical Society, State Agency Records, #30258 State Parks, Theodore Roosevelt State Park Collection, Box 3, File 1. This second application is valuable for its description and specs of thirteen groups of buildings in the South Unit of the park that were razed in 1940, and gives family names, type of building, sizes, building materials. The report states locations are on accompanying maps (not included in archival record). For mention of a granary in the North Unit, see Memorandum, Morris O. Winter, Project Manager, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, Medora, North Dakota, to Inspector Clarke, September 3, 1940, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁵¹ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 14.

⁵² Benton, "Large Land Holdings," 407.

⁵³ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 14.

communities near their water sources and in the upland prairies, introduced invasive species, and created steep declines in native plant and animal species. As gas tractors broke up upland virgin prairie, homesteaders also routinely cleared out floodplain sagebrush, cut western cedar for fencing, created stock ponds, and planted winter-feed crops in the bottomlands. The Badlands homesteading era provides a microcosm of how mechanization and industrialization rapidly restructured the vegetative landscapes and reallocated water and food.⁵⁴

Because of the emerging infrastructure and changes in the natural environment and its grass species, ranchers were able to graze thirteen million cattle on the Great Plains by 1920. The vegetative communities were among the first to change. Buffalo and open range cattle grazing had long since caused a shift from medium and tall grasses to short blue grama and buffalo grass. However, cattle needed 18 percent more grass than bison did to build muscle and store fat. The impact of fenced cattle shifted plant diversity and ground cover in uneven but clearly demarcated patterns. Buffalo grass grew back, but blue grama was slower to reproduce, and so broad-leafed plants such as Russian thistle and ragweed took over. Since the area's conversion back to grasslands when it became Theodore Roosevelt National Park in 1947, the dominant grasses have included native needle-and-thread, blue grama, and threadleaf sedge. Interspersed among this alliance are the invasive field brome and yellow sweet clover, which homesteaders introduced during a feed shortage in the 1920s. Today, Kentucky bluegrass, another feed grass introduced at the same time, continues to dominate in wetter areas of the park, such as old stock-ponds and creeks, where western wheatgrass formerly thrived. Kentucky bluegrass is particularly widespread in the eastern half of the park's South Unit.⁵⁵ The shift in plant life equilibrium was as uneven as the tillage of the fields themselves. Land use itself was stable, meaning the majority of the Badlands and the future Theodore Roosevelt National Park were dedicated to barbed-wire pastures for livestock and fenced fields for grains. As invasive plants extinguished needle-and-thread and blue grama, the most important grazing grasses, cattle began to eat other vegetation that grew in their place, including Russian thistle, thread-leaf sedge, and cracked wheatgrass.⁵⁶ By 1916, 75 percent of Badlands pastures were grazed out, so landowners began cultivating new grasses, including sweet clover, slender wheatgrass, wild oats, and small-grained rye. As homesteaders pushed past the lands' natural carrying capacity for livestock grazing, they even began to cultivate brome grasses in attempt to maintain the temporary stability of fenced ranching.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ "Assessment of Effect Form and Map Attachment to Memorandum, Richard Strait, Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Rocky Mountain Region, to Superintendent, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Received January 22, 1988"; Emmons, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing"; Lena Halliday interview, 8; Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 234.

⁵⁵ Shannon Amberg, et al., *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Natural Resource Condition Assessment. Natural Resource Report NPS/THRO/NRR—2014/776* (Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, February 2014), 68-69, 72.

⁵⁶ P. F. Trowbridge, Report of the Director, July 1, 1919, to June 30, 1920 (Fargo: Agricultural Experiment Station, North Dakota Agricultural College, 1921).

⁵⁷ Edwards and Ableiter, *Soil Survey, McKenzie County, North Dakota*, 15; "Report of Cultural Resource Inventory, Proposed Project Areas, by John Taylor, Park Archeologist, April 2014"; Don Short, Interview, Medora, Billings County, Region X, December 12, 1974, Bismarck: North Dakota Oral History Project, 1974, North Dakota State Historical Society; North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, *Grass*, Bulletin 300 (Fargo: North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, 1941), 13, 16.

However, as historian Geoff Cunfer clarifies, plant communities were not completely reordered, but rather experienced constant readjustment due to climate change, fluctuating rainfall, tillage patterns, and livestock movement. The reorganization, then, resulted in a “sequence of periods of temporary equilibrium,” rather than waves of progressively invasive vegetation.⁵⁸ The most prominent non-native plants included smooth brome, Japanese brome, downy brome, Kentucky bluegrass, spotted knapweed, bindweed, Russian thistle, sow thistle, and sweet yellow clover. Leafy spurge, perhaps the most noxious invasive plant on the Plains, was introduced in Massachusetts in 1827 through seed contamination, and became highly concentrated in the Northern Plains by the 1920s. Each stem contains up to 150 seeds. One seedling has the capability of spreading up to twenty-four square feet in four years. Leafy spurge is drought resistant; its root system can be up to fifteen feet deep and can store three years’ worth of nutrients.⁵⁹ Additionally, North Dakota’s geographical location at the center of North America creates a strong continental climate with nearly constant wind. With no barriers to the north, south, or east, atmospheric air masses consistently flow into western North Dakota.⁶⁰ This constant wind hastened the spread of seeds across tilled land and changed vegetative hierarchies.

Badlands stakeholders responded in several ways to the reordered vegetative hierarchies. North Dakota politicians were mindful of environmental changes that could potentially overthrow their grand agricultural experiment. The state passed seed laws in 1910 in an attempt to remediate cropland soils. In 1911, the Better Farming Movement introduced county extension agents who promoted diversification and saving the soil from overuse and exhaustion.⁶¹ However, farmers viewed diversification as unwarranted federal control of their production rates. Homesteaders instead bonded over ideals of frontier individualism, a hatred of outside controls, and a disdain for North Dakota’s perceived colonial relationship to the Twin Cities and other urban centers. Settlers were more amenable to O.A. Stevens’ recommendations. A botanist with North Dakota Agricultural College, Stevens suggested in a 1930 agricultural bulletin that landowners cut and plow wild rose roots, and till their land frequently to stop the spread of this “weed.”⁶² However, these new agricultural practices hastened erosion (already a dominant regional problem), depleted nitrogen, and created sod-bound vegetation.⁶³

⁵⁸ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 236.

⁵⁹ Michael A. Trammell and Jack L. Butler, “Effects of Exotic Plants on Native Ungulate Use of Habitat,” *Journal of Wildlife Management* 59, no. 4 (October 1995): 808-809; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Recommendations for the Management of Leafy Spurge in Theodore Roosevelt National Park,” National Park Service, Leafy Spurge Scientific Advisory Panel, October 1994, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://library.ndsu.edu/tools/dspace/load/?file=/repository/bitstream/handle/10365/4351/1116ca94.pdf?sequence=1>; Laurie Richardson, et al., “A Botanical Review and Vegetation Management Strategy for Theodore Roosevelt National Park” (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, August 2012), 74, 85-86.

⁶⁰ John W. Enz, “North Dakota Topographic, Climatic, and Agricultural Overview,” January 16, 2003, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/ndsco/documents/ndclimate.pdf>; Earl E. Stewart and Robert E. Stewart, *A Multiple Land Use Study for a Nine County Area of Southwestern North Dakota: [Summary Report]* (Fargo: Little Missouri Grasslands Study, North Dakota State University, 1973 [i.e. 1974]), 14.

⁶¹ O. A. Stevens, *North Dakota Weeds*, North Dakota Bulletin 243, second revision of North Dakota Bulletin 162 (Fargo: Agricultural Experiment Station, North Dakota Agricultural College, 1930), 1; Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 252.

⁶² Stevens, *North Dakota Weeds*, 5.

⁶³ Theodore Roosevelt Centennial Commission, “1858-1958 Theodore Roosevelt and American Agriculture,” 3.

Shelterbelts and wood-filled draws provide visible evidence of homesteading's alteration of vegetative communities through livestock raising. The names of creeks located in and near draws indicate homesteaders' presence, and include Paddock, Jones, and Jules Creeks in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park's South Unit and Appel Creek in the park's North Unit.⁶⁴ Livestock foraging shifted plant alliances along these creeks and in the shelterbelts and draws. Homesteaders' livestock grazed in the bench lands and fields, but often migrated toward woody draws in what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Draws are areas of low ground along a hillside, with upward-sloping terrain on three sides. The fourth side of the draw slopes downward and serves as a channel for water and snowmelt from adjacent uplands, seeps, springs, and creeks. Run-off from seeps and springs adds higher moisture levels and more frequent surface and subsurface water movement in these draws and bottomlands than in the upland prairies, creating more diverse and dense biomasses. These vegetative communities comprised less than 20 percent of the vegetation in Theodore Roosevelt National Park and in southwestern North Dakota, yet homesteaders and their livestock congregated around and in them because of the diversity of the biomasses and the forage potential in years of low precipitation.⁶⁵

Of the four woodland habitat types in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, *Fraxinus pennsylvanica/prunus virginiana* (green ash-chokecherry) communities were particularly susceptible to vegetative changes. These communities developed as long "stringers" along draws or other high-precipitation, low-ground areas. Livestock used green ash trees in these stringers for shelter and forage. Constant trampling, rubbing, and foraging by livestock prevented development of mature ash in the draws. The depletion of pole-sized trees opened the tree canopy, which in turn exposed highly erodible soils to increased wind and sunlight. Livestock hooves compacted these soils, making the environment hospitable to rapid growth of snowberry shrub (buckbush), woods (wild) rose, and non-native Kentucky bluegrass, smooth brome, and yellow sweet clover. Heavily used stands of green-ash and chokecherry bushes changed to dominant shrub communities, rather than cycling through natural vegetative succession phases.⁶⁶

Vegetative changes in and around draws have been documented across the southwestern North Dakota Badlands, although documentation is lacking for activity specific to draws in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Given the extent to which homesteaders combined farming

⁶⁴ Judith E. Trent, "Historic Resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Maltese Cross Cabin, Elkhorn Ranch Site, Peaceful Valley Ranch, East Entrance Station, Picnic Shelters, Little Missouri Overlook Shelter," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, National Park Service, Denver, Colorado, draft March 1984, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

⁶⁵ James Steubbendieck and Gary Wilson, An Identification of Prairie in National Park Units in the Great Plains, National Park Service Occasional Paper No. 7 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986), 157, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/science/op7/index.htm; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Recommendations for the Management of Leafy Spurge in Theodore Roosevelt National Park."

⁶⁶ Michele M. Girard, Harold Goetz, and Ardell J. Bjugstad, *Native Woodland Habitat Types of Southwestern North Dakota*, Research Paper RM 281 (Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, 1989), 1, 3; Jack Butler and Harold Goetz, "Influence of Livestock on the Composition and Structure of Green Ash Communities in the Northern Great Plains," in *Wooded Draws: Characteristics and Values for the Northern Great Plains*, ed. D. L. Noble and R. P. Winokur (Rapid City: South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, 1984), 46, 48; Lynn R. Irby, et al., "Dynamics of Green Ash Woodlands in Theodore Roosevelt National Park," *Prairie Naturalist* 32, no. 2 (June 2000): 78.

with small-scale ranching and livestock raising, and the ways in which livestock made use of draws, these draws can be considered as historic resources indicative of the homestead era. Livestock have not grazed the draws inside the park since 1947, and these areas are in the process of returning to green ash-dominated communities.⁶⁷

The converging practices of early twentieth century livestock and agriculture shifted habitats on the Little Missouri Floodplain as well. The vegetative community here typically shifts from a dominant cottonwood-willow state to Rocky Mountain juniper and then to green ash-American elm. This last community or alliance is the vegetative climax for the Little Missouri Floodplain. However, homesteaders' clearing of the land and their cattle's trampling, rubbing and foraging of the floodplain delayed succession to green ash-American elm and instead contributed to the formation of cottonwood-willows as the floodplain's dominant community. Currently, the cottonwood vegetative alliance comprises 55 percent of the Little Missouri Floodplain, while the cottonwood-Rocky Mountain juniper alliance and the cottonwood-peach leaf willow alliances add another nine and 5 percent, respectively. The green ash-American elm alliance only comprises 24 percent of the floodplain, a clear indication of disturbance and delay. However, plant communities do not necessarily progress to new alliances in clearly demarcated patterns. The Little Missouri River historically had minimal flow regulation or channel stabilization, allowing the natural reproduction of cottonwoods. The spatial pattern and age of these cottonwoods indicate that at least some of these woodlands remain in their natural state.⁶⁸ However, the understory of the cottonwoods in the floodplain indicates evidence of cattle grazing. Homesteaders seeded yellow and white sweet clover, smooth brome, and Kentucky bluegrass during the 1920s feed crop shortage. These introductions changed vegetative hierarchies and reordered plant community relationships, in turn reducing the carrying capacity of the land for livestock grazing.

Transformed Animal Communities

Animals also experienced disturbance in what would become Theodore Roosevelt National Park, although the decline and near extinction of large ungulates began prior to the homestead era. Elk, bison, bighorn sheep, and deer were all present in the park until the late 1800s. The number of feral horses multiplied during the ranching and homestead eras, and by the 1940s, several hundred freely roamed southwestern North Dakota.⁶⁹ The western grouse population rapidly declined as demand for the delicacy soared in hotel restaurants in Dickinson (thirty-six miles east of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's South Unit), in Fairfield (thirty-five miles northeast), and in eastern markets. With no organized hunting seasons and no system to administer licensing, casual hunting flourished. North Dakota soon instituted controls such as the 1891 hunting season laws and the 1897 hunting license requirement. However, the state did not

⁶⁷ Richardson, et al., "A Botanical Review and Vegetation Management Strategy for Theodore Roosevelt National Park."

⁶⁸ Amberg, et al., *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Natural Resource Condition Assessment*, 93, 95-98; Richardson, et al., "A Botanical Review and Vegetation Management Strategy for Theodore Roosevelt National Park," 142. See Richardson for current conditions of vegetative communities in the park and for a map that can be used as an overlay on the homestead map.

⁶⁹ Amberg, et al., *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Natural Resource Condition Assessment*, 8-11, 95.

have a budget for law enforcement and did not provide for a game warden's salary and money to print licenses.⁷⁰ As late as the 1910s, the federal government paid settlers like Lena Halliday to capture wild "broom tail" horses, coyote cubs, and rattlesnakes.⁷¹ Prairie dogs were one of the few native animals that increased with human disturbance of rangeland. By 1915, prairie dog towns up to 250 acres in size were scattered along the Little Missouri River in Billings County.⁷² Today, Theodore Roosevelt National Park's South Unit Wilderness contains 350 acres of prairie dog towns at Big Plateau (280 acres), Tomamichael (thirty-eight acres), and Ekblom (thirty-one acres). The North Unit Wilderness has two towns spread over 125 acres near Squaw Creek (twenty-six acres) and on Steven's Plateau (ninety-eight acres). The Great Plains wolf, Audubon bighorn, and grizzly bear were historically present in the park, but are now gone. It is unclear the role in which homesteaders might have played in reducing these populations. In 1956, officials reintroduced bison, elk, California bighorn, and pronghorn into the park's South Unit.⁷³ These reintroduced species both restore some of the historical biological diversity of the area and represent mid-twentieth-century American sensibilities that valued such animals for aesthetic and recreational purposes. Thus the animals represent both natural and cultural resources.



Pronghorn in or near Elkhorn Unit. 2013. Photo by John Kochanczyk.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Wagner, "From Theodore Roosevelt to the Izaak Walton League: A Social History of Hunting in North Dakota, 1880-1950," *North Dakota History* 78, no. 1 & 2 (2013): 3-22.

⁷¹ Lena Halliday, interview.

⁷² Norman G. Bishop and James L. Culbertson, "Decline of Prairie Dog Towns in Southwestern North Dakota," *Journal of Range Management* 29, no. 3 (May 1976): 218.

⁷³ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Wilderness Stewardship Strategy" (National Park Service, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, March 2010), 74-75.

Homesteader Transportation Corridors: Roads and Trails in the Badlands

Although homesteaders fancied themselves independent and self-sufficient, surviving roads provide physical evidence of settlers' relationships with and dependence on local towns and eastern capital, markets, and supplies. Roads pulled people to western North Dakota and provided transportation within the region. When homesteaders returned to former communities to marry or work, or both, they told others about their Plains homesteads. This reactivated the kinship communication channels so that East and West remained linked through the duration of the homestead era.

Roads in western North Dakota illustrate the links between homesteaders, nearby communities, and the national economy required to colonize the West. One such road was the Halliday Road and its crossing at Paddock Creek Bridge, which connected the Halliday homestead and ranch to the town of Medora. Locations of at least four other homesteader roads have been identified within the boundaries of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, although site visits are necessary to confirm any extant resources. Medora, sitting adjacent to what became the park's South Unit, became a destination for most roads, including Schram Hill Road, which extends in a north-south direction from the old Highway 10; Homestead Road to Peaceful Valley; and an unnamed road from Don Short's homestead. Roads were not the only means of transportation for settlers. The Hallidays and other homesteaders used a variety of trails, including Paddock Creek Trapping Trail, to trap small game for cash. The Little Missouri River also served as a transportation corridor to Medora and between homesteads. Old Highway 10 was an original homestead road, and stretched north of Buck Hill near Jones Creek. It is possible that an additional road led northward from the park's North Unit to the Chaloner's Ferry crossing at the Little Missouri River. This location was just under the Long X Bridge and took the traveler to Watford City.⁷⁴



The Long X Cattle Trail, which passes through the North Unit here, connected North Dakota ranchers to roads and railroads that served as avenues into a national industrial ranching economy. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi.

⁷⁴ Lena Halliday interview; Don Short interview; Kathie Ryckman Anderson, *Dakota: The Literary Heritage of the Northern Prairie State* (Grand Forks: University of North Dakota, Office of the President, 1990).

Agriculture in the Badlands developed as an industrial process dependent on transportation corridors like roads, trails, and rivers that connected raw materials, homesteaders, and national markets. These commercial ties to eastern markets fostered growth of nearby towns. McKenzie County was viewed as the “Island Empire” because its towns served as the gateway between western ranches and farms and eastern markets. Watford City, fourteen miles north of Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s North Unit, was the principle city for shipping farm produce and cash crops on the Great Northern Railroad. As ranch hands drove cattle along the Little Missouri River to rail line shipping points, Medora emerged as a cattle- and horse-sales town.⁷⁵

Conclusion: Land Hardships, Ecological Failure, and the End of the Homesteader Era

Settlers altered the fragile woodlands and prairies of the Badlands in their efforts to maintain a standard of living they had known in the wetter communities they had left. American dreams best suited for ample precipitation and fertile soils of the East and Midwest came under stress immediately. Cash, rather than land, became the coveted resource as homesteaders battled to turn a profit on the windy, northern prairies. The Badlands were not a place that people called home for long.

Faced with the difficulty of making a living through farming on the arid Plains, many homesteaders turned to wage labor and diversified employment. The very act of taking on employment outside the homestead created a conflict between their American ideas of independent land ownership and the reality of depending on multi-job and multi-seasonal wage labor. Forty percent of all registered homesteaders in McKenzie County worked off their farms for cash. Men and women had no uniform set of employment practices other than seasonal migration patterns. Waiting for their fields to turn a profit, and then compensate them for lack of a cash crop in the first few years, homesteading men and women often returned to their former Minnesota communities to work as lumberjacks, hire themselves out as tenant farmers on nearby homesteads, or use their trade skills to earn a living in a nearby town.⁷⁶ Some homesteaders like Badlands-booster Carl Olsen, attempted to diversify their income through dude ranching.⁷⁷ Most, however, left their claims for months at a time.

Carpentry was a common skill for Norwegian men, and the lure of wage-work increased their participation in construction booms in the region as railroads expanded and new towns incorporated and grew. The miles of North Dakota’s railroad tracks almost doubled between

⁷⁵ Hudson, “Migration to an American Frontier,” 242–265; Anderson, *Dakota: The Literary Heritage of the Northern Prairie State*; Don Short interview; Emmons, “Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing.”

⁷⁶ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Resource Management Plan—Cultural Component, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota,” 7.

⁷⁷ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 152; Merv Floodman and Thomas J. Turck, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch and Greater Elkhorn Ranchlands,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, U.S. Forest Service, Dakota Prairie Grasslands, Bismarck, North Dakota, August 6, 2012, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch and Greater Elkhorn Ranchlands BI CO” folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Letter, Fred Novik, Acting Regional Director, to Hal Davies, President, *Minot Daily News*, October 14, 1963, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

1898 and 1915, from 2,662 to 5,226, and 137 towns incorporated between 1900 and 1910 because of increased transportation accessibility. Most of the railroad activity involved building spur lines from main routes into newly settled areas. The Great Northern, for instance, built a line through Watford City, the seat of McKenzie County, fourteen miles north of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's North Unit. Most of the region's towns sat along the Great Northern railroad tracks, providing employment in the railroad and construction booms.⁷⁸

Jobs and environmental conditions declined rapidly and unexpectedly. Railroad construction stopped with the onset of World War I and never resumed. Deforestation in Minnesota and Wisconsin was nearly complete, and millwork no longer offered a cushion for homesteaders looking for seasonal jobs. Dry soils remained Badlands farmers' biggest challenge. In 1919, wheat farmers experienced the first of a series of severe droughts that lasted until the late 1930s. Another dry spell in 1922 left their cattle unable to survive the winter and their wheat unable to grow in the summer. The region received only seven to eight inches of rainfall in the early 1930s, much less than the twenty inches that fell annually during the earlier decades.⁷⁹

Crop prices also dropped across the nation. In 1919, the year the Allies and Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles to end World War I, farmers sold wheat for about \$2.16 per bushel. Then prices dropped to \$0.99 per bushel in 1928 and then a low of \$0.25 per bushel in 1929. Resistant to unions, Badlands farmers formed cooperatives in an effort to increase their bargaining power at the grain elevators. However, overproduction pushed wheat prices down, causing the cooperatives to fail as grain elevator storage and railroad shipping rates enveloped what little profits existed.

Plummeting land values and bank failures contributed to the unstable situation. Property prices fell by 50 percent across the Northern Plains states during the 1920s, and many farmers defaulted on loans taken out earlier to expand acreage and mechanize. With no collateral, farmers' ability to purchase seeds, feed, and equipment disappeared. By 1923, 573 banks in North Dakota failed because of dependence on the agricultural economy. South Dakota banks experienced a 71 percent failure rate by that same year. Regional income dropped in tandem with bank failures, to \$375 per capita, just over 50 percent of the national average. Mechanization brought its own problems as well. The decline of horses and their associated manure meant additional expenses for machinery upkeep and gas and for synthetic manure. Under the presidencies of Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, foreclosures rose but the federal and state governments declined any aid.⁸⁰

Farmers managed to continue dry-farming in the 1920s and early 1930s despite droughts, falling grain prices, and elusive bank credit. The belief in the eternal value of wheat and the hope of "next-year" remained evident in at least one homesteader's perspective when he explained,

⁷⁸ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 239, 242.

⁷⁹ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 52, 95, 156.

⁸⁰ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 156.

“Wheat was our sole source of income and sole meaning of our lives. We were never its masters, but too frequently its victims. It was rarely long outside a conversation.”⁸¹

Human visions of an agrarian empire swiftly came up against the natural limits of sustainability in the Badlands and the vagaries of an international marketplace. The Northern Plains avoided the Southern Plains’ Dust Bowl because of its low temperatures, longer snow cover, conversion to rangeland instead of vast crop fields, and loamy soils that resisted erosion. Dust storms occurred in the Southern Plains in the spring and fall, seasons when much of North Dakota lay covered in snow. However, industrialized agricultural practices and intense fenced livestock pasturing left its own unique marks of poverty and environmental disaster on western North Dakota. When mechanized agriculture reorganized plant and animal communities too extensively, nature reminded them that environmental conditions ultimately guide cultural practices. For instance, the tri-county area of Billings, Slope, and Golden Valley lost 240,000 acres of feed crops and wheat in 1934 alone.⁸² Many western North Dakota and the interior Plains counties experienced similar losses.

The combined disasters in the economy and environment pushed some North Dakotans toward a reconsideration of the Badlands’ agricultural abilities. By the late 1920s, the trickle of homesteaders evacuating rural areas in the western half of the Plains states turned into a flood of desperate families. South Dakota lost 190,000 residents, the most of any agricultural state during the 1920s and 1930s. Kansas and Oklahoma followed closed behind. North Dakota’s population declined by 121,000 people, with 71 percent of them exiting the state between 1935 and 1940. McKenzie and Billings Counties in particular experienced heavy losses. More than half of the original homesteaders exited the Badlands permanently and returned to former communities in the Midwest.⁸³ Others moved to nearby towns or other states. Those farmers who stayed on their land relied on kinship networks and the elusive promise of “next year.” Norwegians, a major ethnic group in McKenzie County, exercised unique and remarkable staying power in the Badlands because of their rural farming heritage and their enclaves of community support.

Drought, over-use of surface and sub-surface waterways, and the reordering of habitats provoked homesteading failures and led to the federal government classifying these lands as sub-marginal and setting them aside for new uses. Government intervention focused on solving poverty and then reclassifying land, but Badlands farmers resisted the notion that their successes came at the expense of environment health. In the 1930s, nature pushed back on farmers and ranchers for altering the environment too extensively. The dynamic and resilient ecosystems used by American Indians for centuries now required redemption after only a few decades of capitalist agriculture had depleted soils and species. As a result, a new vision for the land emerged, one that involved not agrarian empire, but government-managed recreation and tourism.

⁸¹ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 80.

⁸² Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 156.

⁸³ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 52, 95, 156.

Chapter 6

The New Deal and Park Beginnings

Clara Keyt
With Kailee Swolley

As homesteading failed, a new vision for the Badlands emerged. For more than ten thousand years, human beings had understood the region primarily as a landscape of production—a place where resources could be obtained and used (and sometimes used up) in order to produce good that fostered prosperity. Between the two World Wars, however, people began to re-envision the Badlands as a landscape of consumption, where people who already prospered could come to spend their resulting leisure time and capital. As had occurred in previous eras, groups with competing economic interests contested this transition, but a transformation did occur. Through nearly three decades of debate, from 1919 to 1947, North Dakotans and the federal government rebuilt the landscape physically and legally so as to make it conducive for this new recreational vision. In 1947, the contest culminated in the creation of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. The resulting changes, specifically a new road system, “landscape naturalization,” Rustic architecture, and organized campgrounds illustrate the shift in the Badlands toward a growing national focus on recreation, and environmental restoration. Just as importantly, these environmental and landscape changes demonstrate the merging of the National Park Service’s contrasting missions of public access and natural resource protection.

Recreational Tourism, the National Park Service, and a New Vision for the Badlands

The rise of national recreational leisure paralleled the decline of agricultural production in rural communities. President Theodore Roosevelt’s conservation movement two decades earlier had laid a foundation for this shift with the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906 and the subsequent creation of national parks and monuments during his presidency, including Devil’s Tower in 1906 and the Grand Canyon in 1908. The federal government, still fully a decade away from establishing the National Park Service, had partnered with railroad companies to promote visitation to the most majestic scenery and crowning features of America’s landscape. The Great Northern, Northern Pacific, Union Pacific, Santa Fe, and Southern Pacific threw their political weight towards Congressional approval of new parks in scenic areas at the same time that these same railroad companies influenced agrarian development of the interior Plains.¹ As the fascination with wilderness grew in the early twentieth century, this partnership concluded that tourism and development of areas with striking geological features would, as the environmental historian Richard West Sellars observes, “sustain and energize each other through their interdependence.”² It would also promote some protection of rapidly diminishing natural

¹ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 20.

² Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 21.

resources. This interdependence between the federal government and the railroads spurred the parallel development of parks and resorts, usually near areas of grand geological significance. Mackinac Island, the Grand Canyon, Sequoia, and many other parks all established tourist camps, concessionaires and trails to encourage lingering visitation. Yellowstone's figure-eight road system, finished in 1905, served as model for other parks to expand their transportation corridors.³ As Sellars explains, partners in park development, including auto associations, railroads, and construction companies, "made a business of scenery," and sold it as "an improvement of mental and physical well-being, an enhancement of citizenship and a bold level of patriotism."⁴ This new marketing approach guaranteed that in the early twentieth century, tourism and recreational consumption of landscapes would be an important part of economy in West. Boosters and the federal government eventually laid this vision onto the Badlands.

Congress established the National Park Service under the Organic Act in 1916, underscoring a new national vision of how Americans should use and consume their landscapes. The act stated that the new agency's fundamental purpose was "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."⁵ The notion of the value of scenic landscapes was not unique to the federal government. Frederick Law Olmstead, the well-known suburban landscape architect, was already articulating these principles, believing that national "scenic pleasuring grounds" and "outdoor areas with aesthetic appeal" could offset the ills of industrialization.

Such ideas appealed to the American middle and upper classes. Unlike the labor-intensive lives of hunter-gatherers, fur traders, ranchers, and homesteaders, industrialization had enriched many twentieth-century Americans and freed them from the need to work nearly constantly to support their basic needs. Increased disposable income and time to spend on leisure, the beneficiaries of industrialism flocked to park local and national. The rise of a national car culture further bolstered parks' popularity. Automobile ownership prompted a growing number of middle-class Americans to experience the rural outdoors. The new mode of transportation allowed freedom from the city, greater flexibility than the railroad lines, extended vacations, and, above all, choices in the spending of free time. Henry Ford's automobile sales numbered fifteen million by 1927, and new roads opened up regions once thought formidable and unreachable by the middle class.

Increasingly, boosters in North Dakota embraced these landscape ideals and promoted recreational tourism as a counter to the worsening environmental and financial crises in North Dakota. Locally influential leaders such as Carl Olsen, owner of Peaceful Valley Dude Ranch, believed they could use the national park system's visions and reshape the Badlands into a tourist destination. Badlands geology offered unique, if not classic western, scenery, and the journey to that region represented American individualism. In 1924, Olsen and other area residents

³ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 20.

⁴ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 28.

⁵ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 38.

established the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial National Park Association with these goals in mind.⁶

Local politicians used Theodore Roosevelt's death in 1919 as a platform to advocate constructing a memorial in the form of a state or local park, citing the National Park Service's already existing efforts to convert property to parks, to design roads and trails, and to approve concessionaires' plans.⁷ After all, Roosevelt himself had established the Dakota National Forest, 20 miles south of Medora, in 1908. Of course, all forty-eight states competed for the National Park Service's attention and assistance in the 1920s. However, with western North Dakota as one remaining example of romanticized imaginations of the frontier, local boosters and politicians envisioned the Badlands as an exemplary model for park development. That Roosevelt's brief stay in the Badlands so strongly influenced his later conservation ethic bolstered boosters' belief that North Dakota should hold priority over other states for National Park Service funding.⁸

Boosters believed the conversion of the Badlands into a park would also serve as a physical representation of North Dakota's importance in American settlement, scenery, and resource diversity. Dude rancher Carl Olsen, U.S. Congressional Representative J.H. Sinclair, and U.S. Senator James McCumber introduced a number of park proposals and commissioned several survey reports in the 1920s.⁹ In 1924, Major E. A. Goldman of the Bureau of Biological Survey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, made a trip to the Badlands. He concluded that "the general area is of comparatively little economic importance...aside from the possible future value of the lignite coal still underlying large sections," but that the area was "of high potential value for recreation and game preserve purposes."¹⁰ Phelps Wyman, a Milwaukee landscape architect hired by the Greater North Dakota Association in 1928, argued that the region was indeed suitable for national park status.

Not all locals agreed with this vision, however. Powerful cattle ranchers thwarted the booster's legislative attempts in 1921, 1924, and 1929 to designate the area as a park.¹¹ They agreed with the boosters that something needed to be done to save the economy and the land, but response to environmental and financial crises required changes, and boosters, farmers, and ranchers often disagreed about what form that aid should take. With the declining economy and the challenge to private property usage, most homesteaders remained uninterested in a new recreational vision for the region and instead began advocating for federal agricultural assistance.

Nor did the National Park Service evince much interest in western North Dakota. Park service officials held different ideas of what constituted a landscape worth preserving, preferring

⁶ Warren James Petty, "History of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park," *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1968): 397.

⁷ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 195.

⁸ Albert H. Yoder, "The Proposed Roosevelt Memorial Park," *Quarterly Journal of the Union* 15, no. 1 (November 1924): 51-52.

⁹ Letter, Fred Novik, Acting Regional Director, to Hal Davies, President, *Minot Daily News*, October 14, 1963, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Petty, "History," 396.

¹⁰ Petty, "History," 399-400.

¹¹ Petty, "History," 396-403.

mountains, forests, woodlands, and coastlines. Stephen Mather, director of the National Park Service from 1919 to 1929, believed that the Badlands, although colorful and unique, “lacked the quality of supreme beauty required by National Park standards.”¹² Assistant Director Horace Albright echoed the sentiment, stating that “there were few worthy candidates for parkhood remaining,” because of “lack of sufficient scenic qualities.”¹³ These rejections ironically illustrated the national trend toward consumptive use, rather than resource extraction or production, of lands across the United States. In fact, the National Park Service did have an early interest in grasslands early on. However, Mather and Albright subscribed to “aesthetic conservation,” that is, that parks should be developed for mental health and physical wellbeing, rather than solely for protection and rehabilitation of overused landscapes like the Badlands in the 1920s.¹⁴

The Creation of Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area

The 1932 election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a distant relation of Theodore, abruptly changed land use patterns across the United States and provided financial assistance to struggling rural areas. Of his numerous New Deal experimental programs and projects, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Resettlement Administration, Recreational Demonstration Areas, Works Progressive Administration, and Civilian Conservation Corps brought a new vision of land management—one of recreation and tourism—directly to southwestern North Dakota.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 changed more land use in farming communities than any other act of its time. Farmers viewed it as temporary assistance until wheat prices improved, and had little choice but to participate or abandon their land. They typically received monthly “wheat checks” in exchange for crop reduction, beginning in the spring of 1934. Despite the independent self-image of area residents, one-third of all North Dakotans and 40 percent of Billings County residents also received regular federal relief throughout the remainder of the Depression. Ironically, recipients used their checks to purchase tractors and automobiles, in anticipation of a revival of the grains market.¹⁵ The Supreme Court ruled the Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional two years later, and Congress immediately passed the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act. This legislation introduced a new era of land management and shifted land use patterns in western North Dakota away from farming and ranching. It allowed the federal government to purchase starving cattle for food relief or for disposal, reducing the Badlands cattle industry by 18 percent and nearly eliminating it in the area that would later become Theodore Roosevelt National Park.¹⁶ Congress created the Resettlement Administration in 1935, with the hope of addressing the extensive rural poverty that gripped much of the South and the Plains states. Consistent with the political wrangling over the previous

¹² Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 69.

¹³ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 69.

¹⁴ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 90.

¹⁵ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Resource Management Plan—Cultural Component, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota” (Rocky Mountain Region: National Park Service, September 1986), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library, 7.

¹⁶ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 234.

decade about making the Badlands into a park, the Resettlement Administration and the local resistance that followed was the pinnacle of conflicting cultural ideals. The plan allowed the government to categorize lands according to “best-use” practices and then purchase “submarginal lands.” Additional funding relocated residents away from agricultural areas, permitting the land to heal after three decades of intense agricultural production.¹⁷

Roosevelt strongly believed that submarginal lands would provide for the establishment of recreational areas near lower-income communities and promote conservation policy. He signed Executive Order 7028 in 1933, authorizing research on the nation’s recreational needs and giving the National Park Service approval to locate lands for Recreational Demonstration Areas. Ultimately, sixty-two such areas were established, mostly near cities or as wayside parks along highways. Some were developed adjacent to existing state parks. Ideally, their incorporation into each state’s existing park system alleviated the federal burden of managing national recreation opportunities.¹⁸

Under this program, National Park Service staff surveyed the Badlands the following year. They deemed only 4 percent of what became Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s North Unit and 3 percent of what became the South Unit to be tillable land, and described the rest of the region as “badly used.” Russell Reid, superintendent of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, wrote that, “Much of the soil had been robbed of fertility due to poor farming practices. Erosion in all its forms was much in evidence.” He recommended the elimination of “destructive agricultural and grazing practices and the restoring of natural environments for outdoor recreation.”¹⁹ Later, Recreational Demonstration Area supervisor Morris Winter would add his perspective of this disturbance when he wrote, “early settlers had a stranglehold on the only sources of water... the river and its tributaries.”²⁰ Intense cottonwood growth with cleared understory along the river, for instance, indicated extensive and unmitigated livestock and human use. Newcomers to the Badlands region commented on the denuded soils, land disturbance, and the reordering of plant communities, waterways, and drainage patterns.²¹

As the federal government’s interest in western North Dakota grew, local farmers and ranchers continued to resist intervention, despite the worsening of the Great Depression. Although 42 percent of residents in what became the South Area of Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area and fourteen out of fifteen families in the North Area were on relief, and the value per acre averaged only \$1.08 to \$2.14, most were suspicious of federal offers to purchase their lands for a Recreational Demonstration Area.²² Proud and independent, many homesteaders

¹⁷ Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 103.

¹⁸ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 133.

¹⁹ Letter, Russell Reid, Superintendent, State Historical Society, North Dakota, to Weldon Gratton, Custodian, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, January 28, 1943, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²⁰ Letter, Morris Winter, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, to Russell Reid, State Historical Society, North Dakota, November 26, 1940, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²¹ Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*, 235.

²² Robert Byrne, Project Manager, “Confidential Report of Status of Rehabilitation for Roosevelt Regional Parks,” Bismarck, North Dakota, December 10, 1934, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, State Park Division, including status reports for “Roosevelt Regional Park—Northern Area, Watford City, McKenzie County, North Dakota” and “Roosevelt Regional Park—Southern Area, Medora, Billings County, North Dakota,” Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

initially disputed federal accusations of environmental mismanagement. They opposed this new form of so-called aid. Other residents were reluctant to leave because of their attachment to their homes. Still others, believing in the eternal value of wheat, thought the price offered was too low and that the federal government should instead work to boost prices.²³ This was a version of a national story. Across the United States, New Deal officials urged poor rural locals, from southern farmers to Navajo shepherders, to comply with the rational findings of federal scientific and economic experts. Locals resisted in defense of their way of life, but eventually succumbed. It played out that way in North Dakota too. Sheer poverty, lack of resources, and pressure from negotiation agents led to the sales of land in Billings and McKenzie Counties for a recreational park, and residents relocated to nearby towns or other states. Bill Chaloner became the first homesteader to sell his land in August 1934. This was followed soon after by the sale of 1,174 acres of state school lands; 173 acres of private land, including Carl Olsen's Peaceful Valley Ranch, and 640 acres of the state school section in what became the park's South Unit. Overall, approximately 30,000 acres in McKenzie County and 75,000 acres in Billings County were purchased between 1934 and 1938, for an average price of two dollars per acre.²⁴

The new Federal Surplus Relief Administration allocated \$25 million nationwide to purchase these low-productivity lands and then another five million for the National Park Service to oversee their conversion into state and municipal recreational sites. State parks departments operated independently of the National Park Service, but the two often partnered, at least, intellectually, on landscape development. As historian Linda Flint McClelland argues, both shared "a philosophical foundation advocating landscape preservation and development that harmonized with wilderness and rustic architecture."²⁵ At the end of the New Deal, the new parklands represented this shared philosophy and resulting partnership.

Congress gave the National Park Service responsibility for overseeing the North and South Areas of the new Roosevelt Regional Park in its transition from abandoned agricultural haven to consumption-based recreation area. Recreational Demonstration Areas, the term designating abandoned, exhausted farmlands destined for park development, permanently reshaped cultural visions of recreation. The National Park Service began working with states on these projects in 1934. With a goal of providing recreational facilities and low-cost day trips and vacations for lower-income families, the former homesteading areas of the Badlands were now designated North Roosevelt Regional Park and South Roosevelt Regional Park of the Recreation Demonstration Area.²⁶

²³ Letter, Robert Byrne, Program Manager, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, State Park Emergency Conservation Work, North Dakota Procurement Office, to L. V. Randau, Project Investigator, Submarginal Land, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, November 9, 1934, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²⁴ Letter, Dennis Gackle, Publicity Director, Greater North Dakota Association, North Dakota State Chamber of Commerce, Fargo, North Dakota, to Chester L. Brooks, Historian, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, Medora, North Dakota, May 7, 1956, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²⁵ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 230.

²⁶ Memorandum, Newton B. Drury, Director, National Park Service, and Ira N. Gabrielson, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, to Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, March 15, 1945, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

Recreation Demonstration Areas evaded the traditional scenery requirements of the National Park Service, but soon conformed to the appearance of the agency's sites by sporting standardized road systems, naturalized road banks and slopes, landscape naturalization, and construction of Rustic architecture. Development of the Recreational Demonstration Area regional parks is thus representative of National Park Service standards and New Deal expectations of design and architecture. Historian Richard Sellars argues that park development in the 1930s focused on "manipulating ecological conditions of pockets of the park for tourism use," while leaving the majority of parklands "unimpaired."²⁷ This manipulation occurred largely because of the parallel rise of biological science research with recreational planning in the late 1920s and 1930s. For the first time, the National Park Service engaged in comprehensive planning for conversion of fields, pastures, and homestead sites into scenic vistas and viewscapes, and for standardized Rustic architectural designs. Extensive planting and replanting of native vegetation occurred on a scale not previously encountered because the government created so many Demonstration Areas out of submarginal agricultural lands that were not "traditionally scenic."²⁸ New Deal reshaping of these lands, then, concentrated on selecting and shaping what should be preserved, choreographing roads to create the most picturesque view, and erasing the evidences of human labor from visible landscapes. Historian Richard Sellars argues that "façade management" became the accepted practice for Recreational Demonstration Areas across the country.²⁹ His description illustrates the parallel rise of enhanced tourist accessibility and landscape management. At the same time, the New Deal helped state park advocates develop the landscapes that they promoted since the 1920s.

The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Badlands

The Civilian Conservation Corps provided the bulk of the labor for park development across the nation in the 1930s. The federal government authorized the Civilian Conservation Corps on March 31, 1933, in an effort to alleviate the intense poverty of the Great Depression and to begin environmental restoration of lands damaged by exploitation in the previous decades. Most of the laborers were young men aged 17 to 23, but the Department of Labor also recruited World War I veterans and skilled older local men as well.³⁰ Ultimately, two million enrollees passed through the program and worked in its camps. National parks and monuments hosted 198 of these camps, while states, cities, and counties quartered 697 companies.³¹ Among the Civilian Conservation Corps's most noteworthy work was its contributions to the development of recreational facilities across the country. Corps laborers constructed 711 state parks, one of the New Deal's greatest accomplishments.³² Under the direction of the National Park Service's technical management, the program's enrollees reshaped and rebuilt submarginal lands into recreational facilities for tourists. The program's partnership with the Soil Conservation Service

²⁷ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 3.

²⁸ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 249.

²⁹ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 4.

³⁰ W. Scott Lamb, "Civilian Conservation Corps Put Three Million Boys to Work" (1992), File Box L1, Folder 18, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

³¹ John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1985), 27.

³² *Ibid.*, 132.

resulted in the repairing of more than twenty million acres of eroded soils and the rebuilding of stream and riverbanks, wildlife habitats, aquatic communities, and rangelands. Its cooperative arrangements with numerous municipalities and counties created grade schools, bridges, and transportation infrastructure.³³ In North Dakota, the Civilian Conservation Corps was responsible for physically implementing the emerging recreational vision on the landscape.

The state hosted ten Civilian Conservation Corps camps, mostly in the eastern and middle parts of the state, near Bismarck, Fargo, Mandan, and Jamestown. The first Civilian Conservation Corps camp, or “drought” camp as they were locally known, at Roosevelt Regional Park housed Company 2767 and was established in July 1934 along the east line of Section 16, the state school section. This area along the west side of the Little Missouri River was soon designated as the South Area of the park.³⁴ By August, two additional companies, 2771 and 2772, were established in the new North Area of the park. The work camps followed the typical U-shaped layout, with frame-structured barracks, a recreation room, mess hall, bathhouse and latrine, supply building and garage, and a headquarters. Pot-bellied stoves heated the buildings.³⁵ The camp that housed Company 2772 contained five barracks, none of which remain. Laborers at the camp added an office, repair garage, three truck garages, tool building, and oil and paint shed to the headquarters at Peaceful Valley Ranch. Over the course of the Civilian Conservation Corps program, five hundred and fifty men set to work to transform western North Dakota’s homesteading region into a “natural” and “pristine” environment, despite extensive human occupation and modification of the land for thousands of years. Enrollees worked in Section 16 for more than a year as the government negotiated prices to buy out resistant homesteaders in other sections.³⁶

The Civilian Conservation Corps transformed the emptied and emptying countryside of western North Dakota from a landscape of production to one of recreation. Enrollees immediately began dismantling homestead and ranch structures and other improvements, which were viewed as incompatible with the area’s new mission as a recreational camp. Corps work camps dismantled fifty-four ranch buildings associated with the Abraham, Goins, Johnson, Eckland, Hafstrom, T.E. Johnson, Gress, Gotfredson, Oyhus, and Boicourt homesteads. Workers demolished residences, granaries, barns and outbuildings, chicken houses, sheds, corrals, and fences. Enrollees salvaged or sold some of the materials, including lumber, stone, windows, and doors, for other projects. Other workers filled in the excavations and replaced open lots with

³³ Petty, “History,” 405-416.

³⁴ Ann Emmons, “Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, E-24, “Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms” folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

³⁵ “The Civilian Conservation Corps in the North Dakota Badlands: Companies 2767, 2771, 2772, 1934-1941, Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the C.C.C. in the Badlands” (Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association in Cooperation with the U.S. National Park Service and the Men who Serviced in the C.C.C., 1984), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

³⁶ Petty, “History,” 405-416.

native vegetation.³⁷ They also removed barbed-wire fencing and its juniper and cedar posts put up by homesteaders and ranchers.³⁸ By 1940, the Corps had razed all buildings in the South Area, except for the Ecklund and Johnson homesteads and the main building of Olsen's Peaceful Valley Dude Ranch. The latter later served as park headquarters.³⁹

The changes at the park in the 1930s provide a visual representation of the transition in visions for the Badlands region. They also provide symbols of the newly standardized Rustic architecture and choreographed road systems of the National Park Service. Architectural historian Linda Flint McClelland maintains that: "Park Service architects, engineers and landscape engineers forged a cohesive style of landscape design which fulfilled the demands for park development while preserving the outstanding natural qualities for which each park had been designated. This style subordinated all built features to the natural, and often cultural, influences of the park in which they were placed. Through time, it achieved in each park a cohesive identity that in many cases became inseparable from the park's own identity."⁴⁰

Cohesive landscaping on such a massive scale was well suited and even designed for culture. Mass ownership of automobiles in the 1920s stimulated the need for increased accessibility to parks, and the Great Depression propelled families into parks as a form of free or inexpensive recreation. The outdoors offered a salve for the failed economy, rampant industrialization, and polluted cities. By 1927, locating and designing roads and trails were a significant component of the Park Service's goals.⁴¹ The challenge was to improve public access in the park while leaving the majority of parkland unimpaired for future generations. The resulting road design, developed between 1928 and 1932, molded and blended roads with their landscapes, offered visual engagement with the earth, and preserved and restored large swaths of nature.⁴²

The first Civilian Conservation Corps construction project in the South Area was a road from the work camp to Highway 10, the closest major road and a gateway to the park. Workers completed the road in 1938, and it offered ready access to the scenic views of the Badlands. The resulting seven-mile long, twenty-foot wide road between Painted Canyon and Peaceful Valley Ranch, built along high points of the Badlands, illustrates the relationship between visitor

³⁷ Memorandum, Inspector W. F. Clarke, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 518 Post Office and Federal Courts Building, 5th & Market Streets, St. Paul, Minnesota, to Acting Project Manager Maze, January 27, 1941, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Memorandum, Morris O. Winter, Project Manager, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, Medora, North Dakota, to Inspector Walter F. Clarke, September 4, 1940, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library. The 1940 memorandum contains a short narrative report and material descriptions of homestead buildings razed.

³⁸ "Job Application to Raze Old Ranch Buildings in South Unit," Form No 10-352, August 16, 1940, File TRNP Admin and Historical Records, Accession Number THRO - 474, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

³⁹ Judith E. Trent, "Historic Resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Maltese Cross Cabin, Elkhorn Ranch Site, Peaceful Valley Ranch, East Entrance Station, Picnic Shelters, Little Missouri Overlook Shelter," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, National Park Service, Denver, Colorado, draft March 1984, Section 8, Page 2, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

⁴⁰ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 1.

⁴¹ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 195.

⁴² McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 136.

experience and controlled access through curvilinear alignment and use of natural geological contours.⁴³ Walter Clarke, the Associate Landscape Architect for Region II, wrote that this specific road design, following National Park standards of the era, optimized viewsheds and minimized evidence of construction. “When finished the whole grading revision will produce a gradual slope grade...which carries the eye’s interest to the irregular skyline and interest of the badlands.” Clarke deliberately sought to “blend work into existing surroundings to avoid long horizontal lines that might detract from this scenic drive...for a more naturalistic appearance.”⁴⁴ As representative of New Deal road design, these roads were curvilinear, avoided right angles in the roadbeds, gently slanted their turnoffs, and created a transportation corridor through the park that gave the illusion that it had always been there.⁴⁵ The lack of roadway shoulders, the shallow two-foot drainage ditch, and the placement of structures, comfort stations, developed overlooks and picnic shelters along South Unit Scenic Drive highlight the merging of the natural and the build environment. As the South Unit’s primary road from the 1930s to the present, park administrators have had to reconfigure the roadway in recent years to accommodate greater vehicle traffic.⁴⁶

Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees constructed the North Unit Scenic Drive between 1935 and 1939. The road ran from the park boundary through Cedar Canyon to a circular turnaround and parking area at Oxbow Bend. They also built a bridge on Highway 85 across the Little Missouri River at Chaloner’s Ferry.⁴⁷ Weldon Gratton, Senior Foreman of Roosevelt Regional State Park, created the North Unit Drive as a gentle grade parallel to the Little Missouri River, which placed the traveling tourist on “the very rim of the canyon.”⁴⁸ Walter Clarke, Associate Landscape Architect for the park, discussed the placement of the road to entice visitors into nature. “Too much credit cannot be given to the fine road work through the canyon...the shelter overlook at the top of the Plateau is a fine piece of work, blending into the topography.”⁴⁹ The North Unit Scenic Drive was the only work completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the North Area during the Great Depression and became the only auto route in that area.

⁴³ Ann Emmons, “South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, “Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms” folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Walter F. Clarke, Associate Landscape Architect, Region II, “Planning and Development Report on the North and South Roosevelt Area in North Dakota,” (1936), 4, “CCC Report 1936” file, File Box L1A, Folder 29, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁴⁴ Walter F. Clarke, Associate Landscape Architect, Region II, “Report on Trip to Roosevelt Regional Park, North Dakota,” November 6-13, 1938, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 4, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁴⁵ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 203; Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Interagency Resources Division, National Register of Historic Places, 1993), 232.

⁴⁶ Emmons, “South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park,” Section 7, Page 1.

⁴⁷ Robert B. Horton, Project Superintendent, SP-7, and Weldon W. Gratton, Senior Foreman, L.A., “SP-7 North Roosevelt Regional State Park, Watford City, North Dakota, Justification for Revisions of Master Plan” part of “Master Plan Submittals” May 17, 1937, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁴⁸ Horton and Gratton, “SP-7 North Roosevelt Regional State Park, Justification for Revisions of Master Plan.”

⁴⁹ Walter F. Clarke, Associate Landscape Architect, Region II, “Monthly Narrative Report to Chief Architect, April 20-May 20, 1937,” U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “CCC Report 1937” file, File Box L1A, Folder 30, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

Since the Civilian Conservation Corps era, the park has widened the North Unit Scenic Drive from twenty to twenty-two feet, with one- to three-foot shoulders added. Workers have modified bridges, guardrails, culverts, and headwalls, since the Depression Era, with the turnouts at mile markers 6.2 and 6.3 the only remaining elements containing historical integrity.⁵⁰ Additionally, in 1975, workers replaced the bridge at Squaw Creek, originally constructed in 1938. However, visual access in the North Unit, with viewsheds and vistas of unique geological features, including the Little Missouri River 600 feet below the road, native grasslands, and scoria formations remain the most prominent part of the drive and retain the visual integrity that guided the Civilian Conservation Corps' placement of the road in the first place.



The Civilian Conservation Corps' Little Missouri Overlook Shelter at the North Unit's Riverbend Overlook illustrates the era's Rustic style. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

Roadbed development involved landscape naturalization, and this process is evident throughout the road system in both units of what is now Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The primary element of this philosophy of landscape naturalization is the erasure between a road or

⁵⁰ Ann Emmons, "North Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana., draft February 2001, Section 7, Page 1, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

building and its surrounding environment. Gratton's team followed 1938 National Park Service standards for this process, including grading, sloping, and rounding road banks at a rate of four feet for every one foot of elevation, and smoothing and enhancing slopes with infill soil. This method of back-fill reduced the vertical profile of the road, and aided in blending the roadbed with the topography.⁵¹ Workers then cleared aesthetically unpleasing vegetation and planted or replanted native trees and shrubs including buck brush, sage, and cactus in irregular groupings. The entire process encouraged vegetative regrowth, prevented erosion, stabilized the immediate environments surrounding the roads, and eradicated evidence of construction.⁵²

Vistas or "picture windows" represented as a critical element of National Park Service roadwork. The Civilian Conservation Corps and National Park Service workers determined the best views along the highpoints of the Badlands in the park, cleared out undesirable vegetation, and then framing the picture with aesthetically pleasing shrubs, trees, and mass plantings to screen lesser views or old evidence of labor. The idea, McClelland writes, was to provide the automobile-driving visitor with "climax after climax of views."⁵³ The lasting effects of this policy remain evident along roads created during the New Deal era. For decades after the New Deal, roads and roadside beautification efforts within the Roosevelt park system, like others of their time, served as models for other transportation corridors in the state.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Clarke, "Monthly Narrative Report to Chief Architect, April 20-May 20, 1937"; "North Roosevelt Regional State Park, SP-7, Bi-Monthly Photographic Report, Feb-March 1937," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁵² McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 262; Clarke, "Report on Trip to Roosevelt Regional Park."

⁵³ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 84.

⁵⁴ McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 124.

geological scoria landforms, for instance, shifted from an inhospitable surface element to one that helped the visitor transition from the built environment to nature. Placed strategically beside beautifully choreographed roads, structures in the Rustic style gave the illusion of total immersion into pristine environments while only disturbing selected pockets of it.⁵⁶

Civilian Conservation Corps workers constructed the guardrails and culverts along park roads, parking lot curbing, and overlook safety walls to be “indistinguishable” from nature yet to control human movement and public safety. Created from National Park Service standardized architectural sheets, architects designed these elements to appear as natural outcroppings spaced at irregular intervals.⁵⁷ To avoid long sight lines, twenty-two inch high wood and post guardrails, interrupted “sporadically” by large boulders and shrubbery along the road edges created unbroken views and paralleled natural topography visible while driving.⁵⁸ Engineers designed culverts following the Rustic architectural style as well. The thirty-eight inch high culvert headwalls along the South Unit Drive were constructed of weathered and battered native ashlar sandstone, with irregular lines and joints.⁵⁹ The merging of institutional controls for water runoff with natural materials again illustrated the prominent policy of optimizing viewsheds and erasing lines between the built and natural environments. These institutional controls, particularly thirty-eight culvert headwalls and retaining walls on the South Unit Scenic Drive, show consistency of National Park Service national policies of merging the cultural and the natural. Eight such headwalls and four retaining walls remain as contributing structures.⁶⁰ By using fill dirt to create gradual slopes and hidden, ashlar sandstone retaining walls to stabilize the fill, viewsheds and roadways merged together in a seemingly natural way.⁶¹

Bridges across Paddock and Jones Creeks, constructed of unpeeled logs and other natural materials, also illustrate the merging of nature and culture in the park.⁶² Civilian Conservation Corps workers redesigned the Jones Creek Bridge about fourteen feet above the water, with twelve-foot spillway to the river bottom. The nearby dam, constructed of one-ton sandstone boulders, mimicked the Rustic architecture on the trail and roadside curbing. In 1945, workers relocated the boulders to a corner of the abutment and installed an eddy in their place.⁶³

Albert H. Good, an architect for the National Park Service, constructed the East Entrance Station in the South Area in 1938 as a characterization of this philosophy of merging the built and natural environments. For thirty years, traffic into the park was routed through this entrance.

⁵⁶ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 62; Clarke, “Monthly Narrative Report to Chief Architect, April 20-May 20, 1937.”

⁵⁷ McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 128-129.

⁵⁸ Clarke, “Report on Trip to Roosevelt Regional Park, North Dakota,” 4.

⁵⁹ Clarke, “Report on Trip to Roosevelt Regional Park,” 4; McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 129. Emmons, “South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park” lists out the mile markers of these walls and culverts.

⁶⁰ Emmons, “South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park.”

⁶¹ Clarke, “Report on Trip to Roosevelt Regional Park,” 4.

⁶² Weldon Gratton, “Recollections of the Civilian Conservation Corps and Other Federal Agencies in the Development of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and DeMores State Park” (1984), 5, File Box L1, Folder 13, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁶³ Weldon Gratton, Custodian, Report for the Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area for the month of September 1945, memorandum for the Director, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, Medora, North Dakota, October 10, 1945, “Roosevelt Recreation Demonstration Area Report 1945,” File Box L1A, File 37, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

Abandoned in 1968 when park headquarters moved to Medora, the two buildings, an office/checking station and a pit toilet/privy, have not been in use since. The historic road leading to the entrance station is obscured and no longer has integrity, and the structures sit isolated, one half mile from Interstate 94. With rock-faced, ashlar sandstone walls, these structures illustrate the Rustic architectural style used in national parks during the New Deal era. The stone walls were quarried twelve miles southwest of Medora and crafted by A. Boicourt, a local homesteader and stonemason. The walls jut out from each side of the office building and lead into log fencing.⁶⁴ Einar Olstad, a local rancher and blacksmith, created a pylon of ashlar sandstone with wrought-iron lettering and cowboy silhouette for the East Entrance. In 1966, park administrators moved the pylon to Painted Canyon Overlook. Where this sign reflected Olstad's personal creativity, the other two welcome signs followed pre-planned National Park Service designs.⁶⁵

Workers designed the Little Missouri Overlook Shelter in a similar fashion to the buildings at the East Entrance, although recent surveys indicate no records of its construction. Like the East Entrance station, its walls and piers are constructed of rubble stone. This overlook both moved and controlled tourists by offering visual access through panoramic viewscapes of large swaths of nature. Framed by trees and shrubs, and set on a high point, visual access satisfied curiosity while allowing the land to recover from overuse.⁶⁶

The Cottonwood and Squaw Creek/Juniper Campgrounds also reflect standardized National Park Service plans for tourist experiences in the 1930s. Vacationers often camped under tree canopies or in open meadows prior to New Deal construction. As automobile traffic increased, this damaged the root systems of vegetation, compacted the earth, and caused erosion, leaving undesirable views for subsequent tourists. E. P. Meinecke, a renowned plant pathologist, developed an architectural style for campgrounds that park administrators used in Roosevelt Regional Park and across the country. Meinecke's plans included a tightly controlled, loop access road with "garage spurs" projecting off to designated camping sites. Bounded by rough logs, stones, or vegetation, the road guided campers to specific sites and created barriers to open camping. The National Park Service institutionalized this design in 1932. Four years later, Civilian Conservation Corps workers followed this policy as they constructed Squaw Creek Campground.⁶⁷ The twenty-six site campground used angled spurs and fixed locations for tent sites, tables, and campfires. Modifications to the campground road occurred in 1960 and 1975, with the road completely replaced to allow for group camping and additional individual sites.

The surviving Civilian Conservation Corps-era structures in the park's North and South Units reflect National Park Service planning policies of Rustic architecture including the use of locally indigenous materials, unobtrusiveness, and sight lines that blend natural and cultural elements. Native elements used in construction included sandstone, scoria, ponderosa, juniper, and cedar.⁶⁸ The Rustic picnic shelters at the Squaw Creek/Juniper Picnic Area and Campground

⁶⁴ Trent, "Historic Resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park," Section 8, Page 2; Emmons, "South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," Section 7, Page 1.

⁶⁵ Emmons, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing."

⁶⁶ Trent, "Historic Resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park."

⁶⁷ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 277-278; Petty, "History," 405-416.

⁶⁸ Trent, "Historic Resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park," Section 8, Page 2.

in the North Unit and the seventy-six site Cottonwood Campground in the South Unit provide physical examples of the National Park Service's merging of controlled visitor movement, architectural continuity, and full immersion in nature during road-based experiences. Enrollees from Civilian Conservation Corps Camp #2772 constructed these heavy log-and-stone shelters with scoria fireplaces and flagstone floors to invoke the Rustic architectural style.⁶⁹ Many remnants of Civilian Conservation Corps-era structures in the North Unit have lost integrity, but others retain their historic features. For instance, in the 1930s, workers constructed the camp tender's site at Squaw Creek Campground and operated it as an early ranger station. This board-and-batten building, located a quarter mile north of the entrance on a gravel drive, was remodeled into a residence in 1953. Other surviving elements include three pylon signs constructed in 1938. Although they have lost integrity, they still bear their distinctive wrought-iron pattern of a cowboy on a horse. These signs are located at the South Unit's Cottonwood Campground and at the northern stone entrance in the North Unit.⁷⁰



Theodore Roosevelt National Park North Unit entrance with 1938 pylon sign. 2013. Photo by Maren Bzdek

The late 1930s brought continued change both to the park and to the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. The South Unit's Company 2767 camp closed in July 1937. Half of the foremen were terminated as well, while the other half relocated to the North Unit's company camp. Over the next two years, the North Unit company finished South Unit roads, roadside back sloping, and overlook shelters. They also continued work on the Chateau de Mores Park. In

⁶⁹ Gratton, "Recollections of the Civilian Conservation Corps," 5.

⁷⁰ Emmons, "North Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," Section 7, Pages 5-6.

October 1939, Company 2772, located at Camp SP-8, transferred from the North Unit to Camp NP-1 in the South Unit on the east bank of the Little Missouri River south of Jones Creek. Some of the workers continued to work in North Unit. By November 1, 1941, the buildings and structures of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps were torn down and the last one hundred of the workers left the park.⁷¹ Weldon Gratton, the Project Manager and Custodian who was stationed at the old Peaceful Valley Ranch, remained the only employee in the park for the next five years.

Conclusion: The Creation of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park

From 1941 to 1947, shifting management oversight and continued political discussion about the area's fate as a scenic landscape marked Roosevelt Regional Park. During this period, managers constructed no new structures, roads or trails, but did practice ongoing maintenance such as bridge and road repair, and relocating telephone wiring.⁷² The political wrangling of the next six years, however, propelled the region into the Congressional spotlight. In 1942, Congress began transferring all Recreational Demonstration Areas from federal to state management, and it seemed that the National Park Service vision of the Badlands as a state responsibility would prevail. The National Park Service classification of scenic landscape value still focused on woodlands, mountainous areas, and waterscapes, or "grand, monumental scenery" such as "cliffs and waterfalls thousands of feet high, canyons a mile deep, and soaring mountains covered with great conifers."⁷³ Any addition to the National Park Service that was considered inferior by these standards would arguably lessen the ideal of the United States' environmental and cultural heritage. In repeatedly expressing sentiments that the Badlands did not hold "scenic value," the National Park Service meant that the Badlands were not on par with what it considered a monumental landscape. The agency did not want an inferior area to diminish its high standards, despite the National Park Service's extensive work and approval of structures and roads within Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area.

In the 1940s, North Dakota Congressman William Lemke, serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, partnered with J. Hardin Peterson, chairman of the House Public Lands Committee, in drafting a resolution asking the Department of Interior to support the creation of a national park in the South Area of the Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area.⁷⁴ The counter proposal was designation of the area as a wildlife refuge, but Lemke felt that national park status would better elevate his state's political and financial status among dozens of other communities

⁷¹ Emmons, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing," E-1, E-24.

⁷² Weldon W. Gratton, Custodian, "Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Two," U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, Medora, North Dakota, October 8, 1945, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁷³ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

⁷⁴ [Boundaries of Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota; Establishment of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota; Oklahoma Border Revision]: *Hearings on H.R. 7004, H.R. 4435, H.R. 3593, Before the Senate Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, 79th Cong.* (July 18, 1946), ProQuest Congressional, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu:2048/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1946-plv-0010?accountid=10223>.

competing for federal dollars. In a region exhausted from farming, visitor consumption of the landscape appeared the surest way to boost the region's economy. The resulting bill, which cited the unique beauty of scoria-covered buttes contrasted by leafy draws and the abrupt transitions between the riparian bottomlands and arid prairies, captured President Franklin Roosevelt's attention. Shortly after, he approved a list of Recreation Demonstration Areas worthy of consideration for national park status. The Roosevelt Recreation Demonstration Area, along with Shenandoah and Acadia, appeared on this list.⁷⁵ However, the Fish and Wildlife Service managed the property as Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge between 1946 and 1947.⁷⁶ Operation as a wildlife refuge was less costly and required less management. By the mid-1940s, the park area was home to only a few antelope, deer, grouse, ducks, coyote, bobcat, and other small game.⁷⁷ The area also had a large bird population, including "magpies, hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, woodpeckers, flickers, sparrows, larks, swallows, buntings, wrens, orioles, flycatchers, and many other common species."⁷⁸

Franklin Roosevelt's successor, President Harry Truman, finally signed the bill to create the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park out of the former South Area of the Recreational Demonstration Area on April 25, 1947.⁷⁹ This bill concluded nearly thirty years of local efforts to shift the Badlands environment away from an agricultural production area and toward a consumer-based tourist site. Although the vision for this consumption was largely rooted in economic concerns for western North Dakota, it also reflected the rise of the National Park Service's mission to protect natural and cultural resources and to provide park accessibility for automobile-based tourists. In addition, the park's founding grew out of the social and economic changes in the American middle-class, including disposable income, paid vacations, and family-centered recreation, that had come with a half-century of industrialization. In 1948, an amendment to the bill incorporated the North Area, and allowed livestock access to the Little Missouri.⁸⁰ This move served to maintain good relations with the locals as the borders of the

⁷⁵ Letter, Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, to the President, May 30, 1945, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁷⁶ David Harmon, *At the Open Margin: The NPS's Administration of Theodore Roosevelt National Park* (Medora: Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association, 1986), Chapter 1, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://npshistory.com/publications/thro/adhi/adhit.htm>.

⁷⁷ *A Bill to Establish the Theodore Roosevelt National Park; to Erect a Monument in Memory of Theodore Roosevelt in the Village of Medora, N. Dak.: Hearings on H.R. 4435, Day I, Before the Committee on Public Lands*, 79th Cong. 10 (November 2, 1945), ProQuest Congressional, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu:2048/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1945-plh-0004?accountid=10223>; *[Boundaries of Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota; Establishment of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota; Oklahoma Border Revision]: Hearings on H.R. 7004, H.R. 4435, H.R. 3593*, (July 18, 1946); *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Hearings on H.R. 5587, Before the House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Committee on Public Lands*, 80th Cong. (April 9, 1948), ProQuest Congressional, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu:2048/congressional/doc view/t29.d30.hrg-1948-plh-0005?accountid=10223>.

⁷⁸ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Assessment of Alternatives, Elkhorn Unit Development, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park North Dakota" (Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, 1978), 5, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

⁷⁹ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 1.

⁸⁰ "Management Objectives, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park," File Box L1, Folder 40, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

park expanded. The amendment, which appears in some ways to be a concession to extractive activities by a park dedicated to recreation, illustrates that North Dakota's transition from production to recreation, like most macro changes, occurred gradually overtime and even in 1947 was not yet complete. Indeed, the coexistence of extraction and preservation land uses in western North Dakota has continued to shape park management down to the present day and will do so for the foreseeable future.

For the next thirty years, the National Park Service managed its new charge as a historic site reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt's time in the Badlands rather than as an area dedicated to natural resource preservation. The park hired Ray Mattison, a historian, as one of its first permanent staff positions; the first scientists were not hired until 1953. Picnic shelters, roads, entrances, and campgrounds built by the Civilian Conservation Corps allowed tourists to enjoy the new park, but plans to reintroduce wildlife, including antelope, buffalo, and bighorn sheep, remained elusive. The removal of homesteading infrastructure and the region's redevelopment as a tourist-based recreational site indicated a new land-use vision for the Badlands, one based on consumption rather than production. Like all previous visions of the area, however, this new one posed challenges for those who sought to implement it. While clear narratives framed the significance of other national parks as places of "pristine" or "natural" beauty, no such understanding developed at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. And while some parks featured monuments to great historical stories, little tangible remained to link the park to Theodore Roosevelt's time in western North Dakota. Instead, the park struggled with its absence of "historical structures and sporadic scientific management of vegetative and animal communities and received limited visitation between 1941 and the late 1960s."⁸¹ However, visitors began growing in number and required new and improved recreational infrastructure. As the National Park Service developed its new mid-century policies, particularly the Mission 66 program, the area's transition from production to consumption would continue.

⁸¹ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 2.

Chapter 7

Mission 66 and the Modernization of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, 1947-1972

Janet Ore

After World War II, the United States entered into a period characterized by the ideology of high modernism. Modernism's tenets sprang from early twentieth-century industrial practices and the growth of the federal state, greatly accelerated by World War I. New Deal programs further solidified the gradual modernization of the nation. However, it took the total national effort to fight World War II and especially the unprecedented expansions of federal power justified by the Cold War to bring high modernism to fruition. Its mindset and adherents transformed the American landscape, inscribing on its face the physical embodiment of high modernist principles. The National Park Service took part in this massive reconfiguration of place. In 1956, it initiated its Mission 66 plan, a ten-year program to modernize every aspect of the agency. Most significantly, Mission 66 re-worked the parks' environments, creating landscapes that remain little altered to the present day. Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park participated in this major development, and its resources—architecture, roadways, campgrounds, re-introduced wildlife, and other features—reflected the primacy of high modernist values embedded in its Mission 66 projects.

The high modernist vision of twentieth-century thinkers and politicians sought a utopian goal. In the aftermath of the global devastation of World War I, technocrats desired to remake society anew, jettison the hindrances of tradition and the past, improve people's lives, and build a world that was orderly, rational, and manageable. With faith in scientific objectivity and technological solutions, experts sought to solve the intractability of human problems and master nature. Implementing such a radical vision required strong state power to engineer new bureaucratic systems and a "legible"—simplified and controllable—landscape. To eliminate chaos, centralized authorities wanted to control their citizenry through standardized social systems and a simplification of the landscape. The method they employed was comprehensive planning, and they especially applied this strategy in their efforts to transform the landscape. With master plans, engineers, architects, and administrators held big dreams of wiping away the messy vernacular with clean, new designs. They believed in both the utility and aesthetic of the rational grid. Order came from a landscape divided into logical zones, with each defined for a specific function and neatly laid out in straight lines, right angles, and uniform measures. Within the grid, components—including people—required standardization and categorization so that the authority overseeing them could observe and manage them.¹

¹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Throughout this chapter, I use Scott's definition and understanding of high modernism. Also useful was Philip Van Huizen, "Building a Green Dam: Environmental Modernism and the Canadian-American Libby Dam Project," *Pacific Historical Review* 79 (August 2010): 418-453.

High modernism had its roots before World War II, but it took the Cold War and its accompanying massive federal expansion for the movement to achieve its apogee in the United States. National security justifications, economic affluence, and a complacent citizenry provided the conditions needed for a strengthened authoritarian state. Assured of the righteousness of their vision, high modernists moved ahead with force to impose their ideals upon the landscape. An era of enormous, federally funded projects to organize citizens and control nature ensued. Most extensive was the new military high modernist landscape: bombing ranges; missile installations; air force, army, and navy bases; and atomic weaponry sites, to name just a few. However, the federal government also transformed metropolitan areas with urban renewal, interstate highways, federal centers, and subsidized suburbs. On public lands, massive dams, far-flung clear cuts, and widespread road building changed the nation's topography as nothing had before. Mission 66 was the National Park Service's expression of this larger development of high modernism.²

The National Park Service's Mission 66 Program

The National Park Service's Mission 66 program was a response to a crisis. Fueled by Cold War era affluence and middle-class expansion and spurred by a national identification with the parks and widespread car ownership, Americans flocked to the national parks. They overwhelmed the existing infrastructure, much of it constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Despite the intensive use of the parks, Congress kept National Park Service budgets stagnant. Dwindling numbers of poorly supported park staff struggled to accommodate the hordes needing campgrounds, parking, and water and sewer systems. Park officials believed that the park system required a major overhaul or the admired federal agency and its beloved American treasures would not survive without serious deleterious consequences.³

Taking office in 1951, National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth understood fully the gravity of the parks' situation. A landscape architect by training, Wirth had spent decades in National Park Service administration mostly as chief land planner in Washington, D.C. During the crucial New Deal era when the federal government had greatly expanded its role on public lands, he emerged as the agency's principle planner and a national leader of recreational policies. Accompanying his ideas of modernist planning was his commitment to modern architecture, the design movement streamlining the aesthetic of post-war buildings across America.⁴

² For monographs that illuminate post-World War II high modernist federal programs, see Paul Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests since World War Two* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); James Lewis, *The Forest Service and the Greatest Good: A Centennial History* (Durham, NC: Forest History Society, 2006); Eric Schlosser, *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety* (New York City: Penguin, 2013); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 3-12. Carr is the leading authority on Mission 66. His book came after a draft National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form that established the context of federal actions in evaluating the significance of Mission 66 resources. See Ethan Carr, et al., "National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Boulder, CO and Santa Fe, NM, September 30, 2015, National Register #64501248, E1-E5.

⁴ Carr, *Mission 66*, 39-44, 54, 65-66, 137.

Wirth and his National Park Service associates brought their high modernist principles to bear on the parks' chaotic situation. Recognizing the inadequacy of relying on annual Congressional appropriations, he conceived of a massive effort along the lines of the contemporaneous interstate highway system. He initiated planning for a comprehensive, multi-year program to address these issues and revamp the agency and its parks. With the endorsement of President Dwight Eisenhower, in 1956, Wirth convinced Congress to provide funding for ten years to end in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the Park Service's founding. With the \$1 billion spent over the decade, Mission 66 sought to create controlled, bounded, managed, and designed landscapes. Grounded in the National Park Service's foundational 1916 Organic Act purpose to provide for public enjoyment, the program assumed that fully developed and properly managed tourist facilities could solve the conundrum of allowing full access while preserving natural resources. In this way, the program paralleled other developments in the United States that produced efficient, centralized, planned landscapes that facilitated the consumer economy and society. Mission 66 represented the National Park Service's participation in the "high modernism" of the 1950s and 1960s as the federal government strengthened its control through design.⁵

Rejecting limitations on the ever-growing numbers of visitors, Wirth believed that careful planning and reconstruction could balance protecting wilderness and public enjoyment. Mission 66 planners thought in terms of centralization and special-use zones. The National Park Service could handle the crowds with little effect on the resources by keeping people in specified development areas laid out in a master plan. The backcountry would remain relatively untouched. In parks with sizable natural areas, Wirth wanted to remove administrative and concessionaire facilities from sensitive areas, or even remove them entirely from within park boundaries, and prevent further intrusions into undeveloped regions. Eliminating overnight resorts and constructing large, centralized campgrounds would accommodate automobiles while limiting their damaging effects. New visitor centers created park nuclei where families received information, interpretation, and orientation. Mission 66 limited the load on parks by pushing tourist facilities to the boundary resort towns. Officials removed unsightly or inappropriate intrusions in their newly streamlined environs; they destroyed old buildings, bought out inholdings, and re-wilded landscapes in keeping with park missions.⁶

Enhanced roadways knitted these concentrated nodes together. Like the rest of the modernizing nation, Mission 66 determinedly shaped itself around the automobile. The official park policy became one of day use; from their cars, families could enjoy the scenery while traveling on limited-access corridors and from short stays in campgrounds. Roadways were essential to day use. Improved roads quickly and efficiently funneled cars, virtually the only way families toured the parks, through carefully selected and interpreted scenic routes. Well-designed roadways routed visitors to visitor centers and directed them to scenic drives, campgrounds, and trails. Drawing on the contemporary precedent of interstate highways, engineers in the parks increased mobility by controlling access and widening, straightening, leveling, and paving roads. By managing the flow of visitors, centralizing functions away from delicate resources, and

⁵ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Carr, *Mission 66*, 3-12.

⁶ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 181, 183; Carr, *Mission 66*, 69-72, 82-83, 103-105.

educating the public, Mission 66 planners determined that they could preserve the parks and their backcountries without limiting the people desiring to partake of their beauty. Based on these premises, Mission 66 evolved into a massive reconstruction of the landscape, especially the built environment.⁷

As a broad, comprehensive agency reform, Mission 66 fundamentally marked the National Park Service by changing the appearance of parks, especially their architecture. Mission 66 planners drew explicitly from the modernist movement that swept the disciplines of architecture and landscape architecture in the 1950s and 1960s. Inspired by American industrial structures and principles, European designers in the interwar period had crafted a new building ideology that they hoped would reform society. These artists and architects rejected the extravagantly decorative structures of the nineteenth century and imagined spare, well-planned volumes of space organized on the idea of flow. Such architecture overtly incorporated the most modern materials—concrete, glass, steel—and efficient construction including prefabrication. Because factory buildings, assembly lines, and scientific management principles had influenced these thinkers, modernist structures often resembled industrial architecture—rectilinear, flat-roofed, and austere. Before World War II, modern architecture had little hold on the American landscape, but it had captured the minds of architects including those working for the National Park Service. When post-war affluence stimulated a construction boom, designers turned to modern architecture. Across the nation, gleaming towers of glass and steel or horizontal, streamlined boxes characterized the new landscape. Industrial parks, shopping centers, and skyscrapers sat in a modernized landscape where a network of roads and interstate highways facilitated fast, efficient movement between zones of commerce, industry, and residency.⁸

The buildings that resulted from Mission 66 construction efforts followed the principles of modern design. Constructed of industrial materials like concrete, steel, glass, and plywood and often produced in prefabricated or standardized units, modern architecture rejected overt decoration and allusions to past styles. Meant to be cost effective, the style allowed for flexibility of use with voluminous, open interiors without partitions. Looking like industrial or commercial architecture, modern buildings typically did not utilize elements of the nature around them. Designers meant them to blend into their surroundings by their plainness and unobtrusiveness, rather than standing out as features of a picturesque landscape. The National Park Service architects adopted modernism because it represented the progressive optimism of Mission 66 and it provided a cheaper and quicker solution in the face of the post-war crowds. Although park designers sometimes softened the starkness of modern architecture with stone veneers and dark paint, this new landscape sharply differed from pre-war, Rustic architecture in the parks.⁹

The centerpiece of this modern park landscape, and a microcosm of Mission 66 principles, was the visitor center, the National Park Service's major post-war architectural innovation. Before its advent, public services often lay scattered throughout parks in pre-existing

⁷ Carr, *Mission 66*, 137, 219-221, 257, 279.

⁸ Carr, *Mission 66*, Chapter Five, "Architecture," 127-174. See Gwendolyn Wright, *USA: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008) for an overview of modern architecture.

⁹ For the most complete discussion of Park Service modern architecture, see Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington DC: National Park Service, 2000); Carr, *Mission 66*; Wright, *USA*.

buildings, individual ranger stations, and private operations. In keeping with modernism, the agency consolidated functions into a single building where it could efficiently ensure that the public received guidance on what to see in the park and the narrative story explaining it. Administrative offices, the information counter, an interpretive museum, and restrooms joined in one structure conveniently located next to the main highway at the park's entrance, along a well-traveled route, or at destination point. The visitor center intercepted tourist flow and provided an interface between the park and outside, and between the front country and backcountry. Both National Park Service and consultant architects individually designed visitor centers that explicitly followed modern design with unabashedly modern materials. The buildings usually featured walls of windows, revealing their desire to serve as "viewing platform[s]" for the scene beyond the glass. Inside, designers again considered flow as they sought to direct the pedestrian traffic informally within a large open area. Early Mission 66 visitor centers maintained a loose compartmentalization of spaces, but by the mid-1960s, planners usually delineated zones for specific activities. An open plan with interpenetrating exhibition and informational spaces facilitated easy movement and flexibility of use. Offices lay outside visitors' views.¹⁰

Situated on the circulation flow, visitor centers often sat near new administrative areas that consolidated offices, maintenance yards, and residential quarters. Shielded from public view, these modern buildings received less aesthetic attention; they derived from standardized plans disseminated agency-wide. Flat-roofed, concrete-block shops and garages defined the yard perimeter. Nearby, carpenters erected "Mission 66 ranch" houses—mostly two- or three-bedroom, wood-frame residences with attached garages that emulated the ranch house style so popular in the nation's vast new suburbs. Apartment buildings for seasonal workers lay between the utility and residential areas. Structures inside the park—comfort stations, ranger stations, and entrance kiosks—came from stock plans. With limited funds and expansive needs, the NPS constructed all of these buildings inexpensively with modern materials including engineered woods, concrete block, and laminated beams. Campgrounds, too, followed common agency-wide plans. Consequently, a visual uniformity characterized Mission 66 landscapes.¹¹

The high modernism vision expressed in Mission 66 profoundly shaped Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. Only nine years old when the National Park Service initiated the program, the newly minted park transformed under Mission, establishing much of the park's existing landscape and resources.¹²

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in the Pre-Mission 66 Era, 1947-1955

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's origins lay in the period just before full implementation of Mission 66 as the Badlands region transitioned from private landholdings to state and federal properties. Before and just after World War II, governmental agencies struggled

¹⁰ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, 28; Carr, *Mission 66*, 143-152, 220.

¹¹ Carr, *Mission 66*, 166-168, 173.

¹² I have divided Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's Mission 66 era into the three phases identified in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form "National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources." These phases are Pre-Mission 66, 1945-1955; Mission 66 program, 1956-1966; and Parkscape USA, 1967-1972. See Carr, et al., "National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources," E1-E5.

to consolidate their holdings and establish order and purpose for the lands. When Congress created Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in 1947, the park inherited a landscape with the rudiments for recreation, yet local people were still its primary users.¹³

During the New Deal in the 1930s, a consortium of state and federal agencies had laid the groundwork for a modernist national park oriented toward recreation and less so toward natural or historic preservation. In the lands most suitable for a park, the Civilian Conservation Corps developed the basic infrastructure—roads, campgrounds, trails, picnic areas, and conservation work—needed for local tourism in two separate park units. In 1941, the Corps and other federal programs withdrew, and little happened in the federal Recreational Demonstration Area that oversaw these units. Throughout World War II, a “custodian” watched over the property from headquarters at the old Peaceful Valley Ranch. Pressure from North Dakota Congressmen to transfer the budding park to the National Park Service continued despite Park Service’s doubts as to its qualifications. Officials thought that, though scenic, the two units lacked sufficient grandeur for national park standing. They seemed destined to remain parks for North Dakotans only.¹⁴

It took the region’s national historic significance to finally justify the area as worthy of national park status. National park proponents argued that there Theodore Roosevelt had matured into the famously conservation-minded man who became the nation’s twenty-sixth president. After an initial presidential veto and the subsequent inclusion of Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch site, in 1947, Harry Truman signed the bill creating Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. This was a one-of-a-kind commemorative park, a place dedicated to memorializing Roosevelt’s rough-riding days in North Dakota. To magnify its significance through Roosevelt, the act called for the reconstruction of the Elkhorn Ranch, establishment of a museum or other appropriate memorial in the town of Medora (later dropped), and creation of an interpretative program emphasizing the region’s open cattle frontier and its influence on Roosevelt’s conservation ethic. Complicating the park’s mission was the fact that no structures directly associated with Roosevelt remained in the park in 1947. Instead, the park existed to preserve a more general 1880s landscape with which Roosevelt was familiar. Essentially, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park’s mission interpreted an abstraction, the influence of the Badlands on Roosevelt’s conservation ethic, with little historical material to elucidate that mission. Only the environment and its inhabitants remained as artifacts to tell the story. The park needed to protect and restore the natural resources to fulfill its historic purpose.¹⁵

¹³ Warren James Petty, “History of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park,” *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* 35:2 (Spring 1968): 395-412; David Harmon, *At the Open Margin: The NPS’s Administration of Theodore Roosevelt National Park* (Medora: Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association, 1986), Chapter One, “The Creation of the Park,” accessed April 15, 2016, <http://npshistory.com/publications/thro/adhi/adhit.htm>. This online document includes no page numbers.

¹⁴ Petty, “History,” 413; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter One.

¹⁵ Petty, “History,” 423-426. Today, there is one historic structure associated with Theodore Roosevelt in the park, the Maltese Cross Cabin, which he built in 1883. In 1904, the cabin was moved to the World’s Fair in St. Louis and then toured with the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in 1905. It eventually ended up in Bismarck, North Dakota. In 1959, twelve years after the creation of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, the Maltese Cross Cabin was moved next to the park’s South Unit Visitor Center. Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Maltese Cross Cabin,” accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/historyculture/maltese-cross-cabin.htm>.

With a park mission, albeit ambiguous, and a rudimentary recreational infrastructure, newly-hired park personnel at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park set about establishing National Park Service control over lands that the federal government had only loosely managed until then. New Deal efforts had laid the foundation for federal consolidation. In late 1947, when park administrators took over the offices various federal government agencies had established at the Peaceful Valley Ranch, they inherited properties created for a burgeoning consumer economy that fit with the Park Service's tourist orientation. Long dominated by officials favorable to commerce, the agency had used New Deal programs and funds to build tourist facilities. Previous agencies had developed western North Dakota's amenities for their recreational, scenic, and wildlife potential. Through conservation efforts to preserve the natural Badlands environment, the 1930s programs ultimately opened up lands for consumer use.¹⁶ However, locals still constituted the majority of people who utilized and enjoyed the parklands and frequented the roads, campgrounds, and picnic areas constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Locals continued traditional extractive practices within the new parklands. During World War II, the federal government, under National Park Service control of the Recreation Demonstration Area, had allowed cattle grazing by neighboring ranchers, and although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service technically prohibited it in 1946-1947, thousands of head of cattle and horses trespassed onto the unfenced area. The open range rule placed the burden of preventing livestock from entering the public land on the Fish and Wildlife Service. During its time as a wildlife refuge, the area's officials had let community members gather wood and hay from its forests and fields. In predator control, the federal government worked in conjunction with stock growers to poison and eradicate the coyotes that both groups saw as detrimental to resources, whether cattle or wildlife. These agencies had paid little attention to the historic or architectural resources on the two park units. Although Fish and Wildlife Service personnel had bolstered the foundation of the log headquarters building at Peaceful Valley Ranch with petrified wood and had modified the original barn with a partial concrete floor to install a light plant, the site retained its historic appearance as local people remembered when the National Park Service inherited it.¹⁷

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's purpose, however, demanded greater control and justified development beyond the local needs of recreation, wildlife shelter, or supplemental grass, hay, or wood. National park status meant that Park Service conserved the area's historic landscape for the benefit of all Americans. The park's mission was now also explicitly historical, and that changed how managers viewed and administered its resources. The park existed because of its association with Roosevelt and his Badlands open range ranching experiences in the 1880s. Protection and restoration of natural resources followed secondarily to the area's status as a historical park. However, to show the influence of the environment on

¹⁶ Petty, "History," 426; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter Two, "From Memorial Park to National Park."

¹⁷ Petty, "History," 430; *A Bill to Establish the Theodore Roosevelt National Park; to Erect a Monument in Memory of Theodore Roosevelt in the Village of Medora, N. Dak.: Hearings on H.R. 4435, Day 2, Before the Committee on Public Lands, 79th Cong. 10 (January 30, 1946)*, ProQuest Congressional, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu:2048/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1945-plh-0004?accountid=10223>; Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge, "Narrative Report, May 1-August 30, 1946," 8, "Narrative Report, Sept. 1-Dec 31, 1946," 6-8, and "Narrative Report, Jan. 1-April 1, 1947," 7, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

Theodore Roosevelt and his later conservation policies, the land and its flora and fauna required preservation. Moreover, preservation required regulation.¹⁸

With this historical justification, the new park tightened control over its lands. The 1947 legislation had designated about 35,000 acres for a park in the former South Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area. In 1948, Congress expanded it to include the former North Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, the petrified forest, and the small parcel containing Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch site, about 25,000 additional acres. However, the National Park Service received no additional funding to administer the new area. The inclusion of the North Unit further increased the complexity of park operations under an explicitly historic park mission. The North Unit had little association with Theodore Roosevelt, who only made one known foray into the region. The logic for its inclusion appeared to rest on its development as a state park during the 1930s. Within the three discontinuous units, officials initiated a land exchange program to consolidate the property. The National Park Service swapped with other federal and state agencies like the Bureau of Land Management and the North Dakota Historical Society and traded federal lands for privately held parcels within park boundaries. These Park Service efforts to acquire inholdings and clarify park borders continued throughout Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's history.¹⁹

Inside the park, staff began identifying resources and their conditions and establishing federal authority over the landscape. With its historical focus on interpreting the Badlands as Roosevelt had seen the region, the park set primacy on historical research. Along with the superintendent, the position of historian was one of the first positions established. Hired around 1949, Ray Mattison undertook "high priority projects" involving research on Roosevelt's North Dakota experiences. One of his first imperatives was to determine the location of Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch.²⁰ Although the park had no naturalist or scientist until after 1953, staff inventoried the park's wildlife and began to restore the overgrazed and drought-ridden prairie to "natural conditions." Staff mapped the park's thirty-two prairie dog towns and poisoned one colony that lived near a boundary line. Field personnel located all springs. Administrators made plans to reintroduce pronghorn, bison, and bighorn sheep. In 1951, seventy-five pronghorn from Yellowstone National Park arrived at the South Unit. However, before rangers could keep larger game, the park needed a perimeter fence. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, crews erected a barbed wire fence to keep out the roaming cattle and horses that competed with wildlife for forage. Just as important to inventorying and retaining resources within hardening boundaries, park officials removed local people's traditional activities. In 1953, the park superintendent shut

¹⁸ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Resources Management Plan" (August 1969), I-1, III-1, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Vertical Files, Box LA1, File 60, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; See also Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter Two, on the area's ambiguous purpose as a historical park.

¹⁹ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, "General Management Plan: Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota," (June 1987), 5; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Supplement to Superintendent's Annual Report, 1949," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1948," 6, and "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1949," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Petty, "History," 427-428.

²⁰ Petty, "History," 429; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Monthly Report of Historian, March 1949," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1951," and "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1952," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Ray Mattison, "Preliminary Study of and Identification of the Elkhorn Ranch Site" (1950), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library. Quotation from "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1951." The "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1948" noted that the position of historian was yet to be filled.

down the informal exploitation of parklands through haying, wood gathering, and livestock grazing. In conjunction with area ranchers, the park organized a feral horse roundup in 1954 with the intent of eliminating these non-native animals from the park. Under the new park mission, officials re-evaluated their earlier consensus with ranchers about predators. Though the range was in poor shape in early 1950s, officials judged wildlife to be thriving, except coyotes, important components of the Roosevelt era. The previous exterminations and poisoning on surrounding lands had decimated coyote populations, which managers now believed had resulted in a rodent boom. Coyotes contributed to a historic scene, and what had been a liability for the Fish and Wildlife Service became an asset and resource for Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.²¹



Prairie dog town, North Unit. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi

²¹ Petty, "History," 429-430; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1951," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1952," and "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1953," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Seth S. King, "Wild West Scenes Return in Dakota," *New York Times*, May 3, 1954, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9406EFD91431E43ABC4B53DFB366838F649EDE>.

With scarce funding and intent on simply getting control of its lands, park officials undertook little new physical development in this period. Instead, the park focused on maintaining infrastructure or cleaning up the landscape to conform to its new mission. Officials at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park immediately set about renovating the headquarters at Peaceful Valley Ranch that it had acquired from previous agencies. Crews remodeled the main buildings and laid water, sewage, electric, and telephone systems, and newly hired administrators moved in. In the North Unit, the park took over former Civilian Conservation Corps buildings it had received in a 1953 land exchange with the North Dakota State Historical Society. The park built a new entrance station, remodeled the residences, and added an employee garage.²² The park spent considerable effort dealing with problematic park roads. Dusty in the summer, slippery when it rained, and impassible in winter snow drifts, the dirt and scoria (gravel) roads demanded constant attention. In 1951, the park made road base improvements and blacktopped seven miles of the East Entrance Road on Highway 10 to Peaceful Valley Park Headquarters. Pressured by booster groups, the park placed a high priority on obtaining funds for road improvements and made plans for a more extensive road system.²³

Since the fledgling park had no funding for historical reconstruction, it fulfilled its mission to create a historical scene by eliminating buildings that did not reflect the Roosevelt era. Between 1949 and 1955, crews demolished or moved many of the Peaceful Valley Ranch outbuildings erected during the 1930s. In 1953, the park sold all the buildings at the Buddy Ranch, east of Medora, and then landscaped the site to obliterate the ranch's presence. Between 1947 and 1955, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park maintained a holding pattern; it serviced and inventoried its resources and eliminated historical intrusions, but added little new to the landscape. Nevertheless, it did begin to make the park more "legible"—bounded, simplified, free of inappropriate resources and activities from the past, and ultimately, more controllable.²⁴

From these earlier Park Service efforts, Mission 66 transformed Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. New Deal era agencies had established the basis for the park, but developments between 1956 and 1966 overwhelmed this earlier landscape. The high modernist vision that impelled Mission 66 fundamentally changed the park.

²² Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1949" and "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1950,"; Petty, "History," 426; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms for Buildings 216, 29, 30, 209, 211, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Ann Emmons, "North Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

²³ Petty, "History," 429-430; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1952" and "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1953."

²⁴ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Demolished Structures List and File, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Petty, "History," 431. The Buddy Ranch site later became the site of the Medora airport.

Mission 66 in Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, 1956-1966

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park embodied the high modernism that characterized the larger National Park Service Mission 66 movement. The park's physical layout, architecture, and circulation patterns resulted from principles of Mission 66 modernism—control through zoning and division, efficient flow of visitors, centralization of services, and modern building technologies. Park officials used these principles to enhance the public's recreational enjoyment. In Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, Mission 66 developments had to serve the park's historic purpose to tell the story of how Roosevelt's time in the Badlands and his experiences of prairie exploitation affected his later conservation ideas and policies. With its dramatic erosion, colorful geology, and serene isolation, the environment and its animals were to be both historical artifacts of the open-range era and scenic tourist attractions. For the visitors who increasingly sought out the North Dakota park, the landscape itself needed to convey the historical message while including already established recreational facilities and incorporating additional facilities that visitors expected. The park's Mission 66 prospectus identified the “problem” as educating visitors about the region's historic significance, preserving and restoring it to its historic era, and physically developing the park's infrastructure for visitor enjoyment. Mission 66 in Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, like in parks across the nation, was mainly a construction program, but one tied to the park's historical purpose.²⁵

As part of rational Mission 66 planning for Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, administrators divided the park into zones that specified appropriate activities and separated developed areas from wilderness. The division attempted to delineate the front country from the backcountry while allowing visual access to the terrain that had inspired Roosevelt. Scenic vistas into the strange and spectacular Badlands both gave visitors pleasure and justified the park's mandate to recreate a late nineteenth-century environment. Carefully situated overlooks from each park unit's central roadway allowed these glimpses of wild country. These wilderness areas were Zone 2 regions—so-called “preservation conservation” areas that made up the majority of all three units. Zone 1 regions—“public use and development” areas—narrowly paralleled the roadways, campgrounds, and headquarters districts. Only in Zone 1 areas did administrators allow the construction of visitor support facilities. The park's historic purpose somewhat mitigated the seeming rigidity of the zoning. Plans still held for the development of the Elkhorn Ranch site as laid out in the original park legislation, though the park expended no Mission 66 funds on the physical reconstruction of buildings there. Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's mission also justified the introduction of wildlife and domestic cattle, and construction in Zone 2 areas of structures like corrals and water dish tanks necessary for domestic animals. As cultural artifacts to support the historic scene, these animals and structures were intrusions into “preservation conservation” zones, but as natural resources appropriate to the early landscape, they reinforced the sense of primitiveness consistent with Zone 2 designation. This dividing of landscapes, activities, and resources was a hallmark of the post-war high modernist landscape of which Theodore Roosevelt and the agency were so much a part.²⁶

²⁵ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Mission 66 for Theodore Roosevelt National Park,” Theodore Roosevelt National Park Vertical Files, Box L2, File 15, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

²⁶ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, “Master Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota” (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior, 1973), Zoning Map.

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park efforts centralized visitor services in development zones on the edges of the park. There, services affected no historical artifacts since few physical remnants of the Badlands environment or Theodore Roosevelt's time there remained. Unlike at many historical parks, administrators vacated one of the few historic sites to establish a new headquarters on the park's perimeter. With Mission 66 funding in 1956, the park acquired property adjacent to the town of Medora for its new South Unit entrance and park headquarters. By 1959, the headquarters district was taking shape. That year, the modern visitor center and administrative offices opened their doors, as a centerpiece for visitors and employees. Exhibited near the visitor center was Roosevelt's Maltese Cross Cabin, recently moved from the grounds of the North Dakota Historical Society in Bismarck. The cabin underwent a historical reconstruction in 1960-1961. From the headquarters area, crews laid a new road from Medora to Peaceful Valley, and at its start in Medora set up an entrance kiosk in 1961. With this new west portal, the park abandoned the original west entrance that had required cars to ford the Little Missouri River. In the beginnings of a residential district in Medora, two new ranch houses received their first park occupants. In 1961, a full utilities yard with vehicle storage garage, warehouse and pump house, and shop building created a distinct maintenance area opposite the residences. Next to it lay a four-unit seasonal employee quarters. In 1961, the park added four more residences across the street on the boundary with Medora. In 1965, two more ranch houses and two four-unit apartment buildings for seasonal workers completed the Mission 66 dwellings in the South Unit.²⁷



Dish tank at Halliday Well Group Camp. Photo by Public Lands History Center.

²⁷ Petty, "History," 435-437; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms for Buildings 101-106, 110, 112, 118, 119, 129; Ann Emmons, "South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, Section 7 page 4, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

Mission 66 had fundamentally changed the South Unit entrance, and to a lesser extent reconfigured the North Unit's portal, beefing up a rudimentary administrative area at the entrance. The Civilian Conservation Corps had erected a ranger station in 1938 that the National Park Service acquired in a land trade with the state in 1953. New Deal pylons marked the entrance to the North Unit's Civilian Conservation Corps constructed road and campground. In 1952, the park built an elaborate and "more formal" entrance and fee station with decorative pylons. In 1959, artisans disassembled the 1938 Civilian Conservation Corps pylons and rebuilt new ones reincorporating the original iron rider-on-horse motif. When North Dakota realigned Highway 85 to Watford City, the park laid a new entrance road in 1960. The highway realignment led the park to abandon its North Unit entrance and fee station and construct a new one in 1960 along the new entrance road. Maintaining the more remote region of the North Unit required more park staff and oversight. The park erected a utility building with a carpenter shop in 1957, a three-bedroom house in 1957 or 1959, and a pump and well house in 1957. These structures joined a garage and the existing 1930s ranger station quarters that the park had remodeled in 1953.²⁸



Mission 66 comfort station in the North Unit. Photo by Public Lands History Center

Mission 66 built on the existing New Deal era and early national park infrastructure when it came to campgrounds, but in enlarging them, the program revamped them according to Mission 66 standards. In 1956, reconstruction of Cottonwood Campground in the South Unit was

²⁸ Emmons, "North Unit Scenic Drive," Section 7 pages 3-4; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms.

one of the nine Mission 66 construction projects for the year. Between 1957 and 1962, the campground expanded from twenty-five sites to fifty-one, and workers constructed four “modern” comfort stations, an electrical system, a water system with two artesian wells, and a campfire circle with seating and a “rear screen projection building.” New tables and fireplaces replaced the 1930s era features.²⁹ Squaw Creek Campground in the North Unit also underwent Mission 66 expansion after 1959. Originally a Rustic Civilian Conservation Corps landscape, the campground became a “modern” campground with new water and sewer systems and comfort stations. In the mid-1970s, the site underwent a more extensive rehabilitation with more campsites, group sites, comfort stations, and removal of the Civilian Conservation Corps fire grates, log picnic tables and original amphitheater. Only two stone Corps-era picnic shelters remained.³⁰

As with campgrounds, the New Deal landscape provided a basis for the Mission 66 redevelopment of roads, but the “modern” improvements obscured or eliminated many of the 1930s features. New Deal agency landscape architects had considered central, scenic roads as controlling park development. Careful placement, designed vistas, and proximity to facilities defined the visitor’s experience. Mission 66 planners in Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park used the state park infrastructure as the basis for an expanded road system serving the new purposes of visitor enjoyment and historical interpretation. Containing the park headquarters and the area primarily associated with Roosevelt, the South Unit experienced major road changes under Mission 66. Originally, the entrance road left Highway 10 at the park’s east end, passed through a Rustic Civilian Conservation Corps portal, and continued to Peaceful Valley Ranch. A secondary road continued north to Wind Canyon. A western entrance beyond Medora required a ford across the Little Missouri and led to the ranch. When park headquarters moved to Medora, the park established a new entrance there and obliterated the previous western entrance. Underway in 1963, construction of Interstate 94 necessitated changes to the eastern entrance. The interstate’s construction, surfacing, and new overpass between 1964 and 1966 closed the historic east entrance. Though the park left standing the stone and log entrance building, it eradicated the early road and rerouted park traffic through the Medora station. Seven miles of the original Civilian Conservation Corps road with culverts, occasional guardrails, and retaining walls remained. Following its imperative to provide for visitor enjoyment and follow National Park Service design principles, in 1965 the park began building a thirty-three mile loop road that originated near Peaceful Valley Ranch. Designers laid out the road for scenic views and interpretive points and placed signage along the route.³¹

²⁹ Petty “History,” 436; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms. In 1969, there were 109 campsites in Cottonwood, according to the park’s “Resources Management Plan,” IV-13. In 2001, there were seventy-nine sites and a group site, according to Emmons, “South Unit Scenic Drive.”

³⁰ Petty, “History,” 436; Emmons, “North Unit Scenic Drive”; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms.

³¹ Emmons, “South Unit Scenic Drive,” Section 7 pages 1, 3; Petty, “History,” 436-440. For a full discussion of the importance of scenic roads see Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 174-232 and Laura E. Soullière, “Historic Roads in the National Park System: Special History Study,” National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1995), at https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/roads/index.htm, accessed May 6, 2016.

Designed for recreational access and scenic views, the mostly unpaved, fourteen-mile road into the North Unit joined Highway 85 at the Squaw Creek Campground and wound past the Little Missouri River Overlook to a high point, now called Oxbow Overlook. During the Mission 66 program, the park improved the road to enhance day-use visitation and scenic vistas. It paved the surface beyond the campground, added turnouts with interpretative signage, expanded parking lots, and replaced Civilian Conservation Corps era guardrails. At some point, crews widened the roadbed and in the mid-1970s reconstructed the New Deal era bridge. With the improved roads in both the South and North Units, in true high modernist fashion the park kept visitors within a narrow zone, controlled the interpretive narrative, and facilitated the flow of visitors.³²

The Mission 66 program effectively constructed the Theodore Roosevelt built environment while streamlining the landscape by removing structures that did not represent the historic late nineteenth-century open range ranching era. In order to clarify its message, the park eliminated physical elements that did not support its mission. Under Mission 66, the park took out buildings from the Peaceful Valley Ranch. Planners had hoped to restore the ranch to depict “a typical ranch of the Roosevelt period complete with an exhibit herd of long-horn mixed breed cattle,” but that never materialized. Instead, between 1961 and 1965, laborers moved or demolished ranch structures and outbuildings erected in the 1930s that the park believed had no historical significance. In 1976, only three of the original buildings still stood. The park eliminated other old buildings as well. In 1965, it sold and removed four buildings at Cedar Canyon, restoring the site to a natural appearance. Administrators also began to implement plans for an overlook at Painted Canyon adjacent to the new Interstate 94 highway (constructed 1964-1966) on the east side of the South Unit. In 1964, they initiated their plans by condemning the Noyes property and then tearing down its distinctive commercial structures. Thus, the messy vernacular of a local community and presence disappeared, replaced with the simplified landscape of the high modernist state.³³

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park’s Mission 66 development into a historical park extended beyond construction projects aimed at supporting park visitors; it also meant restoring the natural environment to the period of Roosevelt’s residence in the 1880s. Like the modernists they were, park administrators assumed that recreating an historic environment was achievable and controllable and that concerted management could enable a mastery over nature. Initially, park officials determined that returning wildlife to the Badlands was crucial for

³² Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 11, “Recreation; Mission 66: The Connecting Parkway”; Emmons, “North Unit Scenic Drive.”

³³ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1964,” “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1965,” and “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1966,” Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms; Petty, “History,” 439-440; Dori M. Penny, Thomas K. Larson, and Kathy McKoy, “Peaceful Valley Ranch,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Larson-Tibesar Associates, Inc., July 13, 1994; Barbara Wyatt, “East Entrance Station,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, draft 1976, North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office; U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Mission 66 for Theodore Roosevelt National Park”; U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Environmental Assessment: Rest Area Facilities Remodeling, Painted Canyon Overlook, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota” (Rocky Mountain Regional Office, July 1976); Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, “Resources Management Plan”; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, “Master Plan.”

achieving their goals. In 1951, they brought into the South Unit seventy-five pronghorn, a native species that had seriously declined in the 1930s. The pronghorn required little park management as they moved in and out of the park, fences not hindering their movements. All along, however, the park desired the return of bison, even though by the time Theodore Roosevelt had arrived in the Dakota Territory few remained. Officials began fencing the South Unit soon after the National Park Service acquired it. By 1956, fencing complete, the park brought in twenty-nine bison from Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska and released them into the South Unit. Six years later, with the herd thriving in the South Unit, managers moved more bison to the newly fenced North Unit. Bighorn sheep returned to the park in 1959. Workers created an enclosure for them in the South Unit and moved nine sheep from state lands there in 1960. However, more than these wild species, which were mostly gone when Roosevelt came to the Badlands, domestic animals had characterized the historic period. With the goal of living history, park officials decided to bring longhorn cattle to the North Unit in 1966 and thereafter. The choice of longhorns was strange, as Roosevelt had preferred shorthorns. Though prior to the 1950s park staff had tried to remove the feral horses that competed with native wildlife, disputes about National Park Service roundups by the mid-1960s pressured the park into allowing the horses to remain. As they would have existed in the region during Roosevelt's time, horses seemed as appropriate as the introduced cattle. The 1950s problems with feral horses, however, prefigured later controversies about animal overpopulation that questioned the park's ability to adequately control these natural and cultural artifacts.³⁴



Bison in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Photo by Public Lands History Center.

³⁴ Petty, "History," 428, 434, 437; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 9, "Wildlife Management"; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1948," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1950," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1951," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1952"; "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1953," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1964," "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1965," and "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1966."

Modern Architecture

As the entire park replicated a modernist mindset, the appearance of the development zones also looked entirely modern. Following standard Mission 66 protocol, the South Unit Medora headquarters district lay at a circulation hub—next to the new entrance, the resort town, and Interstate 94. Placed on the park’s fringe, headquarters development did not affect park resources. The Medora headquarters centralized park administration, interpretation, utilities, and employee housing but spatially divided them according to function. Facilities for visitors and administration lay near the entrance station. To the east across an open space, three almost flat-roofed, concrete block structures—the garage, warehouse, and shop—faced inward on a maintenance yard. Directly opposite, eight three-bedroom ranch houses formed a line down the street, each virtually identical to its neighbor despite a few with reversed plans. Two four-unit “efficiency apartment” buildings stood around a sort of courtyard next to the maintenance yard. All of these structures stood well away from visitor facilities. All of them derived from standard Mission 66 architectural plans and exhibited a sort of vernacular modern—understated, uniform, utilitarian, and inexpensive.³⁵

The generic support buildings stood in contrast to the park’s architectural centerpiece, the new visitor center, and the only structure explicitly mentioned in the park’s Mission 66 prospectus. Architect-designed, the structure housed the park’s first permanent interpretative exhibits, tourist information and orientation, and staff offices. As appropriate for a smaller park, the L-shaped building was a simpler version of Park Service Modern than the more famous structures in Yellowstone or Yosemite but still featured a steel frame, streamlined brick veneer, and flat roof. The entry and lobby lay at the axis of the two wings. The layout followed the typical Mission 66 zoning; a large, windowless exhibit room occupied most of one wing with a library, museum, and historian’s office behind it. Offices, bathrooms, and support services lined the other wing. Ribbon windows illuminated these spaces. A flat-roofed colonnade extended around the staff wing and provided useable outdoor space during North Dakota’s hot summers. Visitors accustomed to moving through the various departments in the voluminous spaces of shopping centers understood how to navigate the building. The attention to flow and circulation, the divisions of functions, and the spare, utilitarian style replicated the modern park landscape and larger post-war developments in microcosm.³⁶

Parkscape U.S.A., 1967-1972

During the peak years of the Mission 66 program, the National Park Service remade itself and its landscapes to enhance the enjoyment of the American people. Following high modernist principles, it overlaid a grid of rationality onto natural environments to facilitate the rapidly

³⁵ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms; Carr, *Mission 66*, Chapter 5, “Architecture,” 127-174.

³⁶ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Mission 66 for Theodore Roosevelt National Park”; Carr, *Mission 66*, 142-157; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms for building 208 Visitor Center. For the most complete explanation of visitor centers, see Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*. The Mission 66 built environment and landscape changes at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park exhibit most of the property types identified in Carr, et al., “National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources.”

growing number of tourists visiting its parks. Yet, by 1966, the end of Mission 66, the Park Service found that many of its planned or on-going projects remained incomplete. To address these needs, the agency announced a new program, Parkscape U.S.A., to continue its Mission 66 imperatives. Essentially a third phase of the overall Mission 66 impetus, Parkscape U.S.A. reorganized the system once again and provided funding for the final planned developments. By then, however, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's Mission 66 transformation was essentially complete; the park added few new structures between 1966 and 1972. Its 1973 Master Plan identified Theodore Roosevelt's future goals. Although the document planned for new buildings and site development at the Elkhorn Ranch site and Painted Canyon Overlook, its priorities listed expansion or maintenance of the existing built environment and infrastructure. Thus, little of the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park environment overtly expressed the Parkscape U.S.A. era.³⁷

Conclusion

By the mid-1960s, principles of high modernism had reconfigured Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, its environment, its architecture, and its resources. In 1947, the National Park Service had inherited a disorderly, damaged, vernacular landscape utilized primarily by local people. With the purpose of recreating an inspirational, historic scene for a national audience, park officials undertook a development program—Mission 66—that sought to bring centralized national control to the park units. Joined with high modernist values and Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's historical mission were the Park Service's goals of enhancing tourist enjoyment and the consumption of a managed experience. Following these precepts, administrators realigned the park's physical spaces to create zones of separate functions tied together by the efficient flow of traffic. With the conclusion of the Mission 66 era, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park materially expressed the larger vision of a bounded, managed landscape firmly under the auspices of a strengthened federal government.

³⁷ Carr, *Mission 66*, 324-327; Carr, et al., "National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources," E4-E5, E46-E47; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Master Plan," 26-33.

Chapter 8

Theodore Roosevelt National Park in the Environmental Age: Resources under Threat, 1973-2014

Janet Ore

By the late 1960s, high modernism through the Mission 66 program had shaped a new landscape in Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. The National Park Service had brought order to the young park by consolidating its mark on the environment, rationalizing the movements and experiences of its visitors, zoning and bounding its edges, and providing for the enjoyment and comfort of park goers. Under its mission as a historical park, administrators at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park had attempted to create a living, historical museum for Americans to enjoy, an island of 1880s-1890s badlands where tourists could vicariously relive Theodore Roosevelt's frontier days. With few historical remains from his life there, the land and its flora and fauna became the artifacts that conveyed the area's history.¹

In the early 1970s, the physical environment in which Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park lay reinforced the park mission to interpret Theodore Roosevelt's Badlands experiences and illustrate nineteenth-century open range ranching on the Northern Plains. Following the economic and ecological devastation of the Great Depression, western North Dakota's agricultural basis began to revive after World War II. The war initiated a price rise in agricultural commodities, especially wheat, which generally held through the 1960s. Drought struck western North Dakota in late 1950s and early 1960s and hurt livestock growers, causing them to temporarily cut their herds. However, grazing remained dominant in western North Dakota. Yet while the agricultural life continued, in the Great Plains, the consolidation of landholdings, the lure of non-agricultural jobs in urban areas, and the outmigration from the countryside emptied the rural areas. More than in the rest of the region, North Dakota residents abandoned the state between 1940 and 1970, and its population steadily declined in these years. More isolated and empty of people, the public and private lands surrounding Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park appeared much as they had in earlier generations before the homestead boom. Adding to the ranching scene, the town of Medora began renovations in the mid-1960s. Working in conjunction with the park, Medora remodeled and rehabilitated its historic buildings to a semblance of the town Theodore Roosevelt had visited. Thus, in the early 1970s, the park's mission seemed achievable. From inside the park's units, a visitor could look beyond the boundaries and feel the Badlands' primitive solitude and vastness much as Roosevelt had.

¹ David Harmon, *At the Open Margin: The NPS's Administration of Theodore Roosevelt National Park* (Medora: Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association, 1986), accessed April 15, 2016, <http://npshistory.com/publications/thro/adhi/adhit.htm>.

Despite its modern tourist infrastructure, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park existed in an environment that evoked the pre-modern.²

After 1973, however, the park's separated, bounded world evoking a nineteenth-century ranching frontier encountered the realities of the post-Vietnam War era and its energy needs. Forces from both within the National Park Service and from without began changing the park's purpose and landscape. Developments in the 1970s and thereafter challenged the high modernist vision of Mission 66. Outraged by the Vietnam War, heavy-handed government dominance, Cold War expansion, and the collusion between corporate power and government, many Americans rejected the modernist faith in bureaucracy, rationalization, and universalism. By then apparent in degraded landscapes, the environmental consequences of the rampant development of the post-war years gave rise to a powerful environmental movement. New environmental legislation attempted to put the brakes on unlimited resource exploitation and regulate the actions of government and business. Within the nation and the National Park Service itself, a new ecological awareness took hold. Many National Park Service scientists and resource managers embraced an ecological perspective, the understanding that all living things and their environments existed in complex networks. The boundedness and categorization of the modern era could not contain the complicated interactions within nature. No longer could National Park Service administrators view parks as isolated landscapes under their control. As the nation and the National Park Service entered the environmental age so too did Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.³ In 1978, the park became Theodore Roosevelt National Park with a new natural history mission, to afford "'individuals the opportunity to experience and to reach an understanding of [the Badlands], as Roosevelt once did.'"⁴

Just as the renamed Theodore Roosevelt National Park reoriented itself as a natural park and wilderness area, outside forces increasingly besieged it. In 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) curtailed oil exports to the United States, beginning a period of economic decline and a search for domestic petroleum supplies. Oil and gas exploitation in North Dakota rapidly intruded with ever-increasing magnitude upon the park's environmental integrity. Managed as a slice of the Great Plains ecosystem, the park found itself combatting the encroachment of industrial America. The shift to ecological management of a natural park and the external threats to its environment redefined what the park considered its resources. The animals and landscapes that had been cultural resources under Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park became natural resources under Theodore Roosevelt National

² Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Master Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota" (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior, 1973), 1; Mary W. M. Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains: Years of Readjustment, 1920-1990* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 225, 227; State Historical Society of North Dakota, "Summary of North Dakota History—The Great Depression," accessed April 15, 2016, <http://history.nd.gov/ndhistory/depression.html>; State Historical Society of North Dakota, "Summary of North Dakota History—Postwar Economics & Politics," accessed April 15, 2016, <http://history.nd.gov/ndhistory/postwar.html>; R. Douglas Hurt, *The Big Empty: The Great Plains in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 163, 179, 195.

³ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 3; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 215 (see also Chapter 6, pages 204-266, which covers the rise of National Park Service ecosystems management thinking); Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 306-309.

⁴ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 2.

Park. With the threat from fossil fuels exploitation, less tangible assets like viewsapes, soundscapes, nightscapes, and air quality acquired preminent consideration. The distinct categories of natural resource and cultural resource blurred, prefiguring the current orientation of the historic preservation field on cultural landscapes.⁵



Drilling rig interrupting viewshed within park. 2013. Photo by John Kochanczyk.

National Park Service Context: From Development to Ecology

As the National Park Service undertook its transformative Mission 66 expansions, criticism of its modernization began to swell. The construction of new roads that mimicked interstate highways, visitor buildings that looked like supermarkets, and centralized service areas meant for multitudes seemed to some Americans like excretions on a pristine nature. Emboldened by a growing doubt about high modernism's benefits, environmental groups moved to thwart Mission 66 development and its emphasis on expanded tourism. Within the National

⁵ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapters 3-6.

Park Service itself, a parallel shift in thinking occurred. In response to National Park Service reviews of agency natural resource management, in 1963, two committees of outside experts published reports that initiated a redefinition of the parks' fundamental purpose. The Leopold Report and National Academy of Sciences both emphasized natural resource preservation and ecological management of park environments. Rather than creating an aesthetic scene for tourists' enjoyment, the Leopold Report called for the parks' explicit return to an "ecologic scene...a vignette of primitive America" and "mood of wild America" like the first Europeans might have encountered. As much as possible, parks should manage their landscapes as complex ecosystems of indigenous biota ranging from large iconic mammals down to native plants and insects. This required scientific knowledge of park landscapes. The reports placed science at the center of understanding the environment and put scientists and biologists at the heart of park decisions. The Leopold Report became official National Park Service policy. Through the 1960s and 1970s as Mission 66 ended, the agency grappled with this direction, but gradually adopted an ecosystem management perspective. The natural resources of national parks became the paramount concerns for park administrators.⁶

National legislation in the same period accelerated the National Park Service's transformation of purpose. A series of environmental laws required that parks comply with strict oversight of how their actions affected their natural resources. The Wilderness Act of 1964, National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Clean Air Act of 1970, Clean Water Act of 1972, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and other legislation demanded scientific knowledge of resources and increasingly complex planning documents. Meeting National Environmental Policy Act standards in particular necessitated a professional staff of land managers to undertake the legislated process. By the 1970s, parks began to call such professionals "natural resource management specialist[s]," and on the national level, the National Park Service created its own natural resource management division. Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, cultural resources in parks underwent a review process similar to that for natural resources. However, in most of the nation's big natural parks, restoring and preserving nature took precedent over concern for historic elements. For all parks, administrators' efforts to meet legal requirements, particularly environmental rules, meant that park resource professionals spent more of their time and budgets on environmental compliance work.⁷

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Enters the Environmental Age, 1973-1978

While the National Park Service gradually shifted its orientation away from tourist development and toward ecological management, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park wrestled with its unique status as a memorial park in a decidedly natural history setting. It too began the transition to an ecological purpose.

⁶ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, quote 214, 218, quote 244. See Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, revised edition (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005) for a full explanation of the rise of the environmental movement and its critique of modernity.

⁷ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 233-235.

As its memorial mission remained ambiguous until 1978, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's justification for its projects continued as it had since 1947. During a brief period in 1964 when the National Park Service categorized parks, the secretary of the interior officially labeled it a historical park. The 1973 Master Plan explicitly reaffirmed its historical mission. To be managed "as an historical area," the park was to illuminate Roosevelt's experience of the North Dakota Badlands between 1883 and 1898 and open-range cattle ranching. It would "interpret those geological, biological, ecological, and scenic aspects of the Badlands that helped to influence his thinking as our first 'Conservation President.'" In a surrounding environment of ranches and farms, parklands were "managed under a single use concept to preserve, for the use and enjoyment of the people, a vestige of the North Dakota Badlands as it appeared in the 1880's."⁸ To establish the historic scene, Mission 66 had successfully pushed the agency's landscape changes—the headquarters area and campgrounds, for instance—to a development zone near Medora and the new interstate highway.⁹

To present history with very few surviving historical features, park interpretation mostly rested on the biophysical attributes of the Badlands. The 1973 Master Plan recognized this problem, noting the flora and fauna in conjunction with the park's purpose: "The primary resource of the park is Theodore Roosevelt's association with the Badlands and the open-range cattle frontier of the 1880's. The wildlife, typical of the Great Plains, includes antelope and bighorn sheep, deer, and reintroduced bison. Longhorn cattle have also been reintroduced in the North Unit, and a small herd of feral horses exists in the South Unit. Geological resources include the scenic Badlands, concentrations of petrified tree stumps, and a burning lignite vein." The tension between historic purpose and natural resource management "confused" the staff about the site's mission. By 1968, the Superintendent Arthur Sullivan stated that "'our operations are more akin to natural areas.'" The 1975 Statement for Management reflected the growing sentiment: "'it is now widely held that the primary values of most of the park are natural rather than historic.'" Momentum grew among park staff for re-designation of Theodore Roosevelt as a natural park.¹⁰

Concurrently, large-scale tourist development such as that undertaken during Mission 66 ended at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. By 1973, once Mission 66 had established its modernist design and structures at the park, administrators worked to maintain what they had. Facilities personnel looked after the structures, periodically remodeling interiors and repairing and updating the buildings. In 1975, the headquarters district hooked up to the Medora sewer. Run by concessionaires, Peaceful Valley Ranch received new horse pens and corrals. In the less visited North Unit, the need for various land acquisitions delayed improvements until the mid-1970s. In 1974, crews in North Unit reconstructed nine miles of road and placed a trailer house and washhouse for seasonal employees in the residential area. That year, two more mobile homes went to the Medora trailer court. In 1974, carpenters constructed a washhouse in the housing area near Squaw Creek Campground, and in 1976 worked on the camp tender's residence and office at the campground and pulled in a trailer house for the housing area

⁸ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Master Plan," 1, 4.

⁹ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, "Visual Quality Management Guidelines: Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota" (Theodore Roosevelt National Park: National Park Service, April 1991), 44.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Master Plan," 3; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 2.

nearby. By 1976-1977, Squaw Creek Campground featured new infrastructure, with fifty campsites, three comfort stations, group use area, camp tender's residence, and fee collection station.¹¹

Reinforcing the impetus toward ecological management, the park's flora and fauna took up more of the rangers' time and efforts. The reintroduced buffalo thrived, and soon the park had to cull the herd. It undertook its first reduction in 1963, continuing the process at least every other year. In 1974, to facilitate these roundups, crews erected new buffalo corrals in the North Unit. They continued to maintain the park's eighteen concrete watering tanks. Periodically, the park brought longhorn steers into the North Unit to keep its population visible to visitors. The park nurtured its dwindling bighorn sheep; lungworm plagued the animals and managers worried about keeping the small group alive. As the 1970s ensued, the growing herd of feral horses became a continual operational problem for park officials desiring to maintain reduced numbers. Other invaders—noxious weeds like leafy spurge—spoiled both the historic scene and the natural environment and demanded constant combat. However, with the notable exception of Elkhorn Ranch, by the late 1970s, the natural and cultural resources that Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park needed to tell its historical story were in place. By preserving the cultural scene commemorating Roosevelt, resource managers essentially protected the ecologic scene as well.¹²

A dynamic and organic nature continually thwarted park efforts to control this historic landscape, however. A major park concern and expense were its roads. The clay soils that constituted the dramatic Badlands continually undermined roads, causing potholes, cavities, slumping, and erosion. Flooding in 1978 illustrated the difficulties of presenting a living museum to the public. Following heavy snows, in March the Little Missouri River overflowed its banks, reaching a crest of 16.52 feet. The community worked together to build a 1,300 foot dike to protect Medora and the headquarters area. Water flooded Cottonwood Campground in the South Unit, destroying the road to Rough Rider Campground. Absorbed into the bentonite soil, moisture saturated the scenic roadway, and the Buck Hill portion of the loop road slumped, closing the road entirely. In the North Unit, the fast-moving river eroded the bank dangerously close to Squaw Creek Campground. The burgeoning buffalo herds in both units proved another constant headache for park personnel. Deemed important historic components of the park, bison would not stay within the park boundaries. They pushed their powerful bodies through barbed wire fences or escaped along river crossings, entering surrounding public and private lands. Rangers rode out to herd them back into the park or destroy them if they proved recalcitrant; sometimes rangers paid area ranchers for the damage the animals caused. At one point, the entire South Unit herd slipped out of the park. In 1977, the park replaced its barbed wire with a seven-foot woven wire fence, but animals continued to escape. During the drought in 1980, buffalo left

¹¹ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1974, 1975, 1977, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 2; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms for Buildings 136-3, 136-3A, and 239, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.

¹² Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Asset Lists and Individual Building Data forms for Building 240; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 2; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1974, 1975, 1976, and 1977, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1978," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

the park on a daily basis. Occasionally, buffalo culled from the park's herd and trucked to the Fort Berthoud Indian Reservation fled their new home and wandered across the prairie trying to get back into the park.¹³ If the park could not keep bison in, it failed to keep noxious weeds out. Despite ongoing applications of herbicides, species like leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and knapweed spread. Wildlife managers struggled to keep the introduced bighorn sheep alive in the enclosures that contained them within both units. Despite managers' best efforts, the animals continued to die until by 1990 only six sheep remained in the South Unit. After establishing the Mission 66 goal of creating a historical landscape for the edification and enjoyment of tourists, park managers faced the realities of maintaining a static historic scene in a constantly changing environment.¹⁴

The 1969 Resources Management Plan restated the park's historic mission, but its objectives for resources revealed how the landscape took precedent over cultural remains: "Restore and perpetuate...the vegetative communities and processes which support the natural biotic associations indigenous to the badlands and prairies of southwestern North Dakota.... Restoration, maintenance and management of the natural resources are required to resemble, as nearly as possible, the natural resource scene that occurred during the period of 1883-1898; the time of Theodore Roosevelt's association with the area."¹⁵

While Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park officials grappled with the realities of the environment, the nation's and the National Park Service's ecological shift pushed the park further toward natural area management. In some ways, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's historical mandate had already impelled the park to implement the "ecologic scene." The re-introduced bison, antelope, bighorn sheep, and later, elk, not only represented Roosevelt's era but the landscape of "primitive America" as well.¹⁶ With park zoning under Mission 66, the park had reserved remote areas for protection from development. With passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, Theodore Roosevelt administrators began preparing a wilderness proposal, even though the park was officially still a historic park and entirely on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1970, they proposed a wilderness area in the North Unit, despite the dish tanks there that revealed the hand of man, and put it out for public comment. In 1972, the park sent the recommendation and environmental impact statement required by the National Environmental Protection Act to Congress. While they waited for a decision, managers treated the designated

¹³ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, "Environmental Assessment: Reconstruct Six Miles of Access Road, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Unit (Package No. 148)" (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Midwest/Rocky Mountain Team, August 1982), Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1977"; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1978, 1980, 1987, 1990, and 1992, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapters 8-9; Harmon says bighorn sheep enclosures built in 1959 and 1960, Chapter 9; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Preliminary Draft: Park Roads Engineering Study, Theodore Roosevelt National Park" (Theodore Roosevelt National Park, April 1992), 6, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

¹⁴ Michelle Hellickson, "Assessment of Actions Having an Effect on Cultural Resources, THRO87—I, Leafy Spurge Biological Controls," "Section 106 Compliance XXX 1987" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapters 8-9.

¹⁵ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Resources Management Plan," (August 1969), III-1, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Vertical Files, Box LA1, File 60, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

¹⁶ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 9.

lands as wilderness but one made accessible to the public. In 1972, the park began a thirty-mile backcountry trail system, the first long-distance trails in the park. The next year, it prepared a backcountry management plan and hired its first backcountry ranger the following year. By 1977, naturalists—not historians—served both the South and North Units. Gradually, the park shifted into a “more balanced interpretation of the area’s natural and historical significance.”¹⁷

In sum, the imperatives of managing an unpredictable nature, the national environmentalist mood, and the National Park Service’s burgeoning ecological and scientific critique of its own direction pushed Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park administrators toward an ecological perspective. By the late 1970s, the park was moving in this direction despite its lingering historical mission.

The Creation of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, 1978

In 1978, local and state boosters achieved their long-time dream; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park received a new name and new mission, officially ending its purpose as a historic park and transforming into a natural park—perhaps one of the few national parks to make such a change. Its transition reflected the ongoing ecological reformation of the National Park Service. Under the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, an omnibus bill that pulled together a variety of park initiatives, the North Dakota park became Theodore Roosevelt National Park. With the word “memorial” eliminated, the new park joined others in the natural park category such as National Park Service crown jewels like Yellowstone National Park. The act also officially designated 42 percent of the park—29,920 acres—as wilderness areas in both the South and North units. The 1987 General Management Plan set out the new mission: “The overall objectives are to protect and preserve the natural and cultural environments, to permit natural processes to continue with a minimum of human disturbance, and to provide opportunities for enjoyable visitor experiences, including an understanding of the park’s resources.” In the 1994 Resource Management Plan, the new national park explicitly adopted the National Park Service’s ecosystem management approach formulated at a 1991 conference in Vail, Colorado. This policy was “the process for managing, in a sustainable way, the ecological diversity, economic viability, and the social and cultural systems as a whole rather than as individual parts.” Priority fell on natural resources and an ecologic scene rather than an aesthetic landscape that recalled Roosevelt’s days in the Badlands. In Theodore Roosevelt National Park, however, the natural and cultural resources were not clearly distinct.¹⁸

¹⁷ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report” for 1972 and 1977, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “General Management Plan: Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota” (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, June 1987); Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Development Concept Plans, Theodore Roosevelt National Park,” (1987), 7 (quote), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, “Final Environmental Statement for Proposed Wilderness, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota” (Midwest Region: National Park Service, 1973).

¹⁸ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 7; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “General Management Plan,” 1; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Resource Management Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park” (National Park Service: Rocky Mountain Region, 1994), 6, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

Echoing the national environmentalist mood, the National Park Service ecological perspective, and its new purpose, the North Dakota park brought an environmental sensitivity to its last major building burst in the late 1970s. Reflecting the nation's economic crisis and soaring oil prices, these structures incorporated energy efficiency design. In 1977, the park began a new secondary visitor center and rest stop at the Painted Canyon overlook off Interstate 94. Built on the site of the old Noyes tourist attraction acquired by condemnation in the mid-1960s, it featured the latest energy-saving technology: solar panel powered heating and a wind turbine generating system. However, the visitor center almost immediately experienced problems. Slumping occurred at the site, endangering the overlook; the solar panels required constant maintenance and failed to warm the building during the winter; and park law enforcement continually dealt with vandalism. Though installed, the building's wind generator never operated in its "brief but infamous existence." Eventually, facilities workers switched the visitor center to fuel oil heat. The park had better luck with its new administration building erected next to the maintenance yard at the Medora headquarters. Completed in 1979, the structure included solar panels that worked well to heat the building. By the late 1970s, crews had insulated the Medora residences and shops in response to the oil crisis, and the park continued to search for other ways to curb its energy uses. Concurrently, the park undertook a renovation of the Medora Visitor Center, which reopened in 1980 with a major addition and substantially different design. The trailer that had operated as a temporary visitor center then went to the North Unit, where facilities had always lagged behind those in the much more visited South Unit. Apart from the aforementioned upgrades to the Squaw Creek Campground in 1977, the park constructed no other major visitor support buildings until changes at the North Unit took place in the 1990s. From this point on, most of the park's money and effort went to facilities to assist with wildlife management.¹⁹

¹⁹ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1964," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library (Noyes property photos); Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1980," quotation page 18; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1977"; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1978 and 1979, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Michelle Hellickson, "Assessment of Actions Having an Effect on Cultural Resources, THRO87-c: Convert Solar Heating System to Conventional System, Painted Canyon VC," "Section 106 Compliance XXX 1987" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Michelle Hellickson, "Assessment of Actions Having an Effect on Cultural Resources, THRO87-a: Replace NU Interim VC," "Section 106 Compliance xxx 1987" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files.



Solar panels on Theodore Roosevelt National Park Administration Building in Medora. 2013. Photo by Public Lands History Center

Cultural Resources and Natural Resources

Criticisms of Mission 66-style tourist development and a growing ecosystem management underlying Theodore Roosevelt National Park's new mission necessitated a re-evaluation of park resources. Plans for Elkhorn Ranch illustrated how the definition of and priorities attached to park resources changed in the late 1970s. Inclusion of the Elkhorn Ranch site had been a central justification for creating the earlier memorial park, and its reconstruction was part of the enabling legislation. Research into its exact location and features had preoccupied early park administrators. In 1959 and 1960, archeologists had surveyed the site, and an historical report in 1960 had collected necessary material for the anticipated reconstruction. Though the park's Mission 66 prospectus proposed only limited development at the site "to preserve the aspects of remoteness and wilderness cherished by Roosevelt," administrators held onto the vision of Elkhorn Ranch as the park's cultural centerpiece.²⁰ Difficult to access, the ranch had no extant buildings in the 1960s. However, under the park's historical mandate, the 1973 Master Plan placed the "highest priority" on Elkhorn Ranch development. Now obligated

²⁰ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Assessment of Alternatives, Elkhorn Unit Development, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park North Dakota" (Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, 1978), 1, 8-9, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Warren James Petty, "History of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park," *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1968): 425-426, 434; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Mission 66 for Theodore Roosevelt National Park," 4, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Vertical Files, Box L2, File 15, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

to comply with national environmental and cultural laws, Theodore Roosevelt National Park completed an assessment of alternatives in 1978. The plan's objective was to reconstruct Roosevelt's original nine structures and open the site to visitors. At the time, only about 200 tourists a year ventured there when the primitive roads allowed. Additional facilities were needed to support a full-blown reconstruction; on a forty-acre location, the park hoped to erect a four-unit apartment building, a maintenance structure, restrooms, and picnic areas, all serviced by an improved, paved road and new water and sewer systems. However, just as the park finished the report, everything changed. Planners decided not to put the project out for public comment. The park would not place the redevelopment before the public, stated the superintendent's report in 1980, "until either the mood of the people shifts or when...included in a much more inclusive THRO general management plan." Clearly, management believed that too much opposition—either from environmentalists, local residents, or others—would hamper reconstruction of what had been the central justification for the park's creation.²¹

By 1987, the General Management Plan gave up all idea of rebuilding Elkhorn Ranch, stating that with stronger preservation standards in place not enough evidence existed to document what the original structures looked like. The plan called for simply delineating the buildings' outlines and placing interpretive signage at the site. Minimalist facilities, which included toilets, a storage building, picnic area, and parking at the trailhead, kept visitor services away from Roosevelt's former home. The ranch's value as a historical site faded, but its value increased in other ways. Threats from outside the park emphasized the need to protect the site for less tangible reasons. In the mid-1980s, Billings County wanted to build a new road and bridge across the Little Missouri River to facilitate traffic associated with the area's booming oil development—a "high speed industrial road," Theodore Roosevelt National Park officials called it. The first alternative was a crossing only a few hundred yards south of Elkhorn Ranch. Park officials objected, and after a determination that the road and its traffic would adversely affect Elkhorn Ranch, the county withdrew its plan. In 1995, the county proposed another route farther away. Park staff again worried that the road's visibility and noise would damage the resource by changing the experience of the place. The highway would bring more visitors, requiring more facilities and supervision; it would interject sights and sounds of vehicles; and, preeminently, it would bring direct signs of modernity into an isolated, primitive site. What the park now valued most was the remoteness, isolation, quiet, unobstructed views, and clear air of Elkhorn Ranch.²²

²¹ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Master Plan," 3, 26-27; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1976"; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1978, 1979, and 1980 (quotation from 1980 report, page 21); Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Assessment of Alternatives, Elkhorn Unit Development"; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 10.

²² U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "General Management Plan," 32, map; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1989 (quote), 1990, 1992, 1995, and 2007, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; HDR Engineering Inc., "Environmental Assessment for Blacktail Road/Little Missouri Crossing, Billings County, ND, Highway Traffic Noise Screening Analysis," 1994, Compliance Files, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; HDR Engineering Inc., "Environmental Assessment, Blacktail Road/Little Missouri Crossing, Billings County, ND," 1995, Compliance Files, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Visual Quality Management Guidelines," 29, 31. This is also mentioned in the Environmental Impact Statement for the Little Missouri Crossing.

An even more direct example of how natural park status transformed the meaning and value of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's resources concerned the park's relationship to the National Register of Historic Places. Because the National Park Service originally classified it as a history park, the agency entered the entire park in the National Register when the National Historic Preservation Act created the list in 1966. Apparently, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park personnel de facto considered all resources "historic" that related to establishing a landscape that reflected Theodore Roosevelt's time in North Dakota. As the National Register process became more established, the park nominated its most obvious sites in 1976: Peaceful Valley Ranch, the Elkhorn Ranch site, Maltese Cross Cabin, the Civilian Conservation Corps structures in the North Unit, and East Entrance Station. However, after 1978 when it became a natural park, the former rationale on historic resources no longer held. In 1982, the Keeper of the National Register removed the park from the National Register of Historic Places. Park staff then had to identify its specific historic features and provide an individual rationale for their historic significance and re-listing on the Register. This development initiated the preparation of nominations. The result was a short list of buildings and structures that planners labeled historic and added to the List of Classified Structures. The 1994 Resource Management Plan noted eighty-three natural and seventeen cultural resources important to the park. Once these cultural resources and historic buildings existed as the most visible remains of a historic landscape, but now they sat as isolated features within a landscape managed as a natural environment.²³

Accompanying the 1980s efforts to identify and re-nominate historic structures came strong impetus for a comprehensive archaeological inventory of Theodore Roosevelt. In the

²³ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 10; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan," 21-22, 43, appendices; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1976"; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan," 13; Judith E. Trent, "Historic Resources of Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Maltese Cross Cabin, Elkhorn Ranch Site, Peaceful Valley Ranch, East Entrance Station, Picnic Shelters, Little Missouri Overlook Shelter," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, National Park Service, Denver, Colorado, draft March 1984, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Barbara Wyatt, "East Entrance Station," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, draft 1976, North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office; Dori M. Penny, Thomas K. Larson, and Kathy McKoy, "Peaceful Valley Ranch," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Larson-Tibesar Associates, Inc. July 13, 1994, National Register #94000731; Ann Emmons, "North Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Ann Emmons, "South Unit Scenic Drive, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Ann Emmons, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Multiple Property Listing," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana, draft February 2001, "Theodore Roosevelt NP MPDF + 4 noms" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Merv Floodman and Thomas J. Turck, "Theodore Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch and Greater Elkhorn Ranchlands," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, U.S. Forest Service, Dakota Prairie Grasslands, Bismarck, North Dakota, August 6, 2012, "Theodore Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch and Greater Elkhorn Ranchlands BI CO" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrative files; Memorandum, Deborah Mangis, Environmental Protection Specialist, Denver, to Beth Grosvenor, Historian National Register of Historic Places, "Deletion of Theodore Roosevelt National Park from the National Register of Historic Places," June 4, 1984, copies of official letters attached, "H2215 THRO Cultural Resources Study and Research (NPS area) File #4" folder, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

1940s and 1950s, with the park's memorial mission, staff and consultants focused archaeological research almost exclusively on Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch and very little on prehistoric or historic aboriginal sites. In 1968-1969, James Sperry of the North Dakota Historical Society undertook the first park-wide archaeological investigation, identifying 43 sites, 37 of them prehistoric American Indian sites. He considered twelve eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In the 1970s and early 1980s, other small-scale archaeological surveys revealed a handful of additional sites. But clearly until the late 1980s, Theodore Roosevelt ignored prehistoric resources. In 1987, David Harmon, author of the park's administrative history, stated that archeology was where "the greatest challenges of NPS cultural resources management will fall." He noted that the park provided no interpretation of the native presence in the Badlands. Knowing this major hole in its cultural resource management program, Theodore Roosevelt National Park moved to rectify the deficit in 1987. With the NPS's Midwest Archaeological Center, it engaged Lawrence Loendorf and David Kuehn from the University of North Dakota to conduct three years of intensive inventory. Their efforts found 269 cultural resource sites associated with aboriginal peoples. They considered twenty-eight of the 234 they discovered in 1987-1988 eligible for the National Register and 132 potentially eligible.²⁴

Two immediate developments impelled the Kuehn survey. Section 106 compliance requirements of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act mandated review of federal actions that might affect historic or prehistoric resources, and because the park considered undertaking infrastructure projects, it needed to inventory in those areas. In addition, oil and gas explorations on public lands surrounding the units had generated archaeological investigations. But more importantly, the need to identify and recognize the long occupation of American Indians in park lands came from the influence of native activism. By the 1970s, native peoples throughout the United States began to assert authority over their reservations and seek greater self-determination. In a time of civil rights activism, a new leadership of young, well-educated tribal members moved to gain control of tribal economies, cultural institutions, educational systems, and most importantly, land and resources. The national publicity generated from the more flamboyant acts of groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM)—the occupation of Alcatraz and the Wounded Knee siege, for instance—brought awareness to Americans of the tribes' demands for their rights. One of those rights involved retrieval of important cultural artifacts and ancestral remains from museum collections. From this assertion came the Native

²⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "General Management Plan," 31, 83 ; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 10; Maria Zedeño, et al, "Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota," Prepared for the National Park Service, Midwest Region. Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2006, 56; James Sperry, "A Preliminary Archeological Survey of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park," Dec. 1981, iii, 3, 55-57, in Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; David D. Kuehn, "Draft Final Report on the 1988 Archeological Field Season in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota," prepared for Midwest Archeological Center, 1989, 1-3, located in Theodore Roosevelt National Park library; Rocky Mountain Region Archeological Work Plan, 1 May 1989, 7, in File H2215 "Cultural Resources Studies & Research (NPS Area)," Theodore Roosevelt Administrative Files. The number of Sperry sites varies in these reports—43, 41, and 40. Theodore Roosevelt's Scope of Collections notes 315 archeological sites registered in the Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS). One is listed on the National Register, three are eligible, 60 are ineligible, and 48 have been nominated for listing or recommended as eligible for listing. It is unclear how many of these are aboriginal sites. See "Scope of Collections Statement, Theodore Roosevelt National Park," 7, located in Theodore Roosevelt National Park library.

American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in 1990 (NAGPRA). Some tribal governments assumed oversight of archaeological and historic preservation activities on their reservations. In 1992, Congress formally recognized tribal participation in preservation decision-making by amending the National Historic Preservation Act to allow Tribal Historic Preservation Officers the authority to operate as State Historic Preservation Officers on their reservations. At Theodore Roosevelt, these legislations made dialogue with tribes central to federal actions. With the rise of American Indian sovereignty, it became increasingly important for Theodore Roosevelt to recognize the continuing presence of American Indians in the Badlands and include their voices in park planning. The 2006 Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study undertaken by M.N. Zedeño and her team from University of Arizona laid the basis for such consultations with tribes associated with Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, and Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site.²⁵

This document showed the indistinguishability of cultural and natural resources; the material reality of Theodore Roosevelt's landscape and its flora and fauna retained cultural significance to American Indians. The report explicitly drew on archeology and artifacts—considered cultural resources—from the parks and western North Dakota to establish the cultural history of American Indians associated with the region. The ethnographies, however, reaffirmed tribal perspectives of the biophysical world. In Theodore Roosevelt, consultants from the Three Affiliated Tribes (Hidatsas, Mandans, Arikaras), the Crows, the Standing Rock Sioux, Turtle Mountain Chippewa Crees, the Fort Belknap Tribe (Assiniboines and Gros Ventre), and the Blood Tribe pointed out animals, plants, birds, colored earth for paints, crystals, trees, and many other living and mineral features as significant to their and their ancestors' lifeways and beliefs. More broadly, the tribal members identified places that held practical and spiritual meanings. These included sites as individual as springs, buffalo jumps, and eagle traps and as encompassing as the Badlands of buttes, river bottoms, canyons, and vast vistas. Instead of bifurcating cultural and natural, American Indians held a holistic understanding of park resources; they made no distinction between the biophysical landscape and its cultural significance.²⁶

To Plains tribes, the most significant symbol of this blending was the bison. With the reassertion of Native American sovereignty, Indian nations throughout the West began to rebuild their bison herds. Although economic opportunity figured in these efforts, tribal officials emphasized the animals' ability to revitalize the physical health of their land and peoples but, more importantly, to reinvigorate their peoples' spirits. Protecting the few bison remaining after the great nineteenth-century destruction, the National Park Service including Theodore Roosevelt assisted the tribes. After bison reintroduction, the North Dakota park solved its problem of natural increase by transferring animals to other entities, and thus Theodore Roosevelt opened relationships with western Indian nations. At first, culled buffalo went to other park units, but by the late 1960s, live bison moved to various Indian reservations—the Shoshone-

²⁵ Rocky Mountain Region Archeological Work Plan, 1 May 1989, 9; Peter Iverson, "'We Are Still Here'": *American Indians in the Twentieth Century* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1998), 139-174; Robert Stipe, ed., *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 416-421. Theodore Roosevelt's Scope of Collections Statement notes that the park contains no artifacts under NAGPRA. Scope of Collections Statement, 17.

²⁶ Zedeño, et al, "Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study," 236-264.

Bannock, the Crow, and the Oglala Lakota, for example. The reservation nearest the park, the Fort Berthold Reservation of the Three Affiliated Tribes, or Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation, created its Buffalo Project and began building a herd near Mandaree. In 1985, it received bison from the North Unit. In 1990, Theodore Roosevelt entered an agreement to send most of its excess buffalo to the Three Affiliated Tribes, and park personnel shipped off hundreds of the beasts to Fort Berthold in the 1990s. It also constructed new corrals in the South Unit in 1991, possibly to support the new agreement. Congress assisted Indians' bison projects, allocating funds in 1991 for tribal programs. To coordinate the growing numbers of Indian buffalo herds, advocates created the InterTribal Bison Cooperative in 1990. Now called the InterTribal Buffalo Council with 58 tribal members in 19 states, it describes its mission as “restoring buffalo to Indian Country to preserve our historical, cultural, and traditional and spiritual relationship for future generations.” Working with the national parks on buffalo management issues is one of its main tasks. Bison had become a shared resource concern between Plains tribes and the National Park Service, and this created one more avenue for indigenous peoples to influence the management of a cultural symbol.²⁷



Crow and Ojibwe representatives at the North Unit. Photo from *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study*.²⁸

²⁷ “Buffalo Tracks,” InterTribal Buffalo Council Newsletter, (Summer 2014): 3, 6-7, quote on p. 3, accessed October 16, 2016. At http://www.itbcbuffalo.com/itbc_main_files/buffalotrackssummer2014.pdf; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Appendix 9.1; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1996,” n.p.; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, *DOI Bison Report; Looking Forward*, Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/BRMD/NRR—2014/821, June 2014, accessed October 16, 2016. At <http://www.slideshare.net/USInterior/doi-bison-reportlookingforwardnpsnrr2014821>; Mark Matthews, “Don’t Fence Me In: Are Bison Becoming Just Another Cow with a Hump?” *High Country News*, 8 June 1998, accessed October 16, 2016. At <http://www.hcn.org/issues/132/4210>.

²⁸ Zedeño, et al, “Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study,” 243.

National Park Service scientists usually viewed park wildlife as part of the natural world. In a historical park, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park's animals had been the exceptions. Before the park's re-designation as national natural park, officials had justified the reintroduction of native species because they added historic authenticity to the re-creation of Roosevelt's landscape. Essentially, the animals served as the park's most prominent cultural artifacts, especially when so little else from Roosevelt's time remained. Now, with the new ecosystem restoration mandate, the wildlife represented the Leopold Report's focus on restoring the primitive Badlands environment. The park's most iconic animals were bison, one of its earliest reintroduced creatures, and one that represented cultural values. However, by the 1987 General Management Plan, bison's categorization was definitely natural: the plan discussed the animal under its natural resource management section and portrayed bison as necessary components of a prairie environment. In contrast, rangers never had to justify elk as historic when they reintroduced them in 1985. The reason for elk re-introduction was their "role as a major herbivore in the badlands ecosystem." Their presence when Theodore Roosevelt lived there was an ancillary consideration. Administrators planned for elk, like pronghorn, to move in and out of the park. Valued for hunting and more manageable than buffalo, elk ranged beyond the boundaries into the public and private lands as park administrators essentially allowed them to repopulate the larger region in which the park lay.²⁹

For park administrators, species that had been native to the Badlands made the categorical shift from cultural to natural resource. But the new park mission brought questions about the appropriateness of other animals to the park as "vignette of primitive America," namely the introduced longhorns and the feral horse herd. The memorial park had used the cattle as a living history exhibit representing the open ranching era. As a nonnative species, the longhorn now did not support the new ecological ideals of the National Park Service and the Leopold Report. Yet the park retained them for visitor enjoyment; because they did not reproduce, they remained under control. Feral horses, on the other hand, bred readily and therefore presented park administrators and rangers with significant management challenges. Abandoned or escaped domestic stock had roamed the Badlands in the first half of the twentieth century. When the National Park Service acquired the park property, these animals came with it. At first, the park tried to eliminate them, despite the fact that Theodore Roosevelt had encountered feral horses. In 1954, a horse roundup in the South Unit reportedly removed about 100 horses, most of them branded, confirming the park's view that these animals descended from escaped domestic stock. In 1965, rangers again tried to capture and remove all horses, but their efforts met with "very strong public disapproval." Politically and practically, the park could not easily rid itself of what it considered invasive livestock. Numbers grew; by the early 1970s, park officials believed they exceeded acceptable levels and that herds showed signs of inbreeding. Accepting that they were in the park to stay, the park gained title to the forty-three horses in the South Unit from local rancher, Tom Tescher. Planners produced a resource management plan and in 1978 wrote an environmental assessment for a reduction to forty animals. The cull that

²⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "General Management Plan," 27, quote 28; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 9; Mark G. Sullivan, Jerry A. Westfall, and Lynn Irby, "Buglers of the Badlands," *North Dakota Outdoors*, Nov. 1989): 15-17, clipping file on elk, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Stephanie Briggs, "Elk Issues are Complex," *Dickinson Press*, February 4, 2007, clipping file on elk, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1987," 15.

year “produced no negative response from the public” and brought the herd back to forty-three, right at the target number.³⁰



Feral horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. 2013. Photo by Public Lands History Center

Although the park considered feral horses to be livestock and only kept them in the park for their symbolic, cultural value, the public perceived them as feral horses and a part of the natural scene. The horses required managing to keep herd size in check and living sustainably within the ecosystem that rangers attempted to maintain. Scientists studied the horses' place in the environment and their relationship to the park's other wildlife. With plans and periodic culls, administrators treated the horses the same as buffalo and elk. Feral horses shifted from representing culture and history to representing nature. However, some North Dakotans argued that the park's feral horses were a unique breed indigenous to the Badlands and descended from Sitting Bull's "war ponies." In 1993, a bill in the state legislature sought to make the "so-called Nokota™ horse" the honorary equine of North Dakota.³¹ Park managers were unwilling to mislead the public and infer that the horses were something they were not, noting that credible

³⁰ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 10; Petty, "History," 431; Gary Leppart, "Wild Horses in the Badlands, Run Wild, Run Free," *North Dakota Outdoors* (1978), 21, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Environmental Assessment for Proposed Feral Horse Reduction" (National Park Service: Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, 1978), 1-2, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1976; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1978 and 1979.

³¹ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1993," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

evidence did not support the claims of area ranchers like the Kuntz brothers. Nonetheless, promoted by the Kuntzes in a television story, the park's horses captured the public's attention and brought more scrutiny to the periodic roundups. Feral horses served as Theodore Roosevelt National Park's romantic icon of wildness, much like Yellowstone's wolves. Ironically, this invasive species, as it were, overshadowed the wildlife truly native to the Badlands and became the park's "high profile species."³²

Regional Developments and Theodore Roosevelt

With a natural park vision and an ecological management imperative, Theodore Roosevelt National Park reoriented its mission after 1978. Simultaneously the newly designated national park encountered a very different economic context than that facing the earlier memorial park, and this forced managers to recognize and protect resources unthreatened before this time. In 1973, when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) placed an embargo on oil to the United States, the era of Cold War affluence ended and a time of national stagnation began. In North Dakota, farmers and agricultural producers felt the downturn by the end of the decade. As commodity prices dropped, so too did land values, and as debt and discontent mounted, a farming crisis fomented. In western North Dakota, however, the OPEC embargo and dramatically rising oil prices stimulated a petroleum and natural gas boom. Intense exploration and exploitation particularly focused on McKenzie and Billings Counties, which lay next to the units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. From this time on, the consequences of energy development assailed the park, challenged the idea of its bounded isolation, and impelled a redefinition of the park's significant resources.³³

The 1970s oil expansion was not the first oil boom to affect western North Dakota. A large bowl-like formation underlay western North Dakota, eastern Montana, and parts of Wyoming, South Dakota, and Saskatchewan where an ancient ocean once covered the land. In the deepest part of this so-named Williston Basin were vast quantities of oil. Theodore Roosevelt National Park sat near the basin's center. Geologists knew of these resources, and in 1951, Amerada drilled the first successful well in North Dakota. A frenzy of development ensued that lasted until the mid-1960s when the Medora area was especially busy. Even though in 1953 production opened up in the Fryburg-Scoria oil field near the park's South Unit and drilling occurred near its southeast corner, park officials seemed little concerned. Mission 66 construction dominated park officials' attention. The boom died away after 1966. During this period, however, the park dealt with an application from Tennaco and later Amerada Hess

³² Harmon, *At the Open Margin*, Chapter 10; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report" for 1987, 1996, and 2007, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Clayton B. Marlow, et al., "Feral Horse Distribution, Habitat Use, and Population Dynamics in Theodore Roosevelt National Park," (Bozeman: Montana State University, June 1992, submitted under contract to the National Park Service, Denver, CO), Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

³³ State Historical Society of North Dakota, "Summary of North Dakota History—Agricultural Economy," accessed April 15, 2016, <http://history.nd.gov/ndhistory/agecon.html>; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Oil/Gas Development and Natural Resources of North Dakota," (October 1985), 1-2, Oil and Gas file, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Randy Bradbury, "North Dakota: The Oil Boom is On," *High Country News*, March 3, 1982, Oil and Gas File, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

Corporation to establish well sites in Painted Canyon and to pump oil from underneath the park through slant, or directional, drilling. Finally, in 1974, the company gained the necessary agreements. Though expressing worry about the precedent set by the five slant wells, park Superintendent John Lancaster determined that the unscreened drill sites had little effect on the park's environment. Since little in the environment outside the park changed with this limited exploitation, administrators still presumed that they could maintain a relatively pristine historic scene.³⁴

The slant wells proved to be the opening salvo in the oil industry's siege of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Starting at the time the park became a natural and wilderness area in 1978, threats from outside compelled park managers to continually deal with the deleterious effects of oil production. From the mid-1970s to early 1980s, a boom fostered by high oil prices brought exploration, drill sites, pumps, and roads to the borders of the park's units. Oil companies rapidly descended on the Williston Basin. New fields opened up in McKenzie County on government lands between the North and South Units. By 1979, 140 new wells dotted the two counties encompassing the park, where two-thirds of the state's total drill rigs operated. Oil extraction in at least seven wells increased just outside the northern boundary of the South Unit and on lands surrounding the North Unit. The U.S. Forest Service let permits for wells within a quarter mile of park boundaries. Theodore Roosevelt National Park was no longer a bounded, seemingly controllable entity; it was now one bombarded by external threats.³⁵



The view, looking northeast from the near the South Unit's Boicourt Overlook is an example of drilling operations affecting viewsheds in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. 2016. Photo by Jared Orsi.

³⁴ Bradbury, "North Dakota: The Oil Boom is On"; John P. Bluemle, "North Dakota Oil and Gas Development History and Resources," *North Dakota Geological Survey Newsletter* (June 1981): 16-20, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Edward C. Murphy and Alan E. Kehew, *The Effect of Oil and Gas Well Drilling Fluids on Shallow Groundwater in Western North Dakota*, Report of Investigations no. 82 (Bismarck: North Dakota Geological Survey, 1984), ix; Julie LeFever, "Oil Production from the Bakken Formation: A Short History," *North Dakota Geological Survey Newsletter* 32, no. 1 (2005): 5-8, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 4; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1953," Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

³⁵ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1979," 16; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1980"; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapters 3-4; Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, "Master Plan,"; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Visual Quality Management Guidelines."

Immediately, the park felt the repercussions of the boom. Traveling through the South Unit for quicker access to adjacent oil fields, heavy truck and commuter traffic numbering seventy vehicles a day sped along the park roads and killed growing numbers of wildlife. Smoke from oil development, automobile exhaust, and road dust entered the park's clean air. Loud noises from internal combustion engines and automobiles at the drill sites shattered the Badlands silence. Pumps and tanks jutted up along the horizon. The flaming gasses—flaring—from oil wells lit the night sky. The “intolerable” sulfur odor of rotten eggs from hydrogen sulfide gas released at the sites enveloped the North Unit. By 1986, the noxious smell permeated all the way to the headquarters area of the South Unit.³⁶

The boom reached its peak in the mid-1980s, and then began to diminish until early 1999, when “there wasn’t a single rig drilling new wells in the state.”³⁷ For Theodore Roosevelt National Park rangers, however, the intrusions into the park continued to compound, and their worry about destruction of park resources burgeoned. Particularly concerning were new leases for oil and gas near Elkhorn Ranch. Park administration worked diligently with federal agencies and private developers to mitigate the effects. However, by the late 1980s, rigs sought to sink holes within 150 feet of the boundaries of park wilderness and less than a mile from the Elkhorn Ranch site. By 1987, over 1,500 “active wells” surrounded the three park units. By 1990, the new technology of horizontal drilling spurred a flurry of activity, and a few such wells extended their reaches into the park. Five hundred new wells were projected in 1993. Meanwhile, other threats to park resources from the encroachment of modern industry worried park personnel, who fought a power transmission line in 1988, cell towers near Medora in 2000, and new coal burning power plants in 2002. From the 1970s on, protecting park resources from the continual degradations of oil and gas development dominated administrators’ attentions at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. It was the “greatest resource management workload,” a continual “major workload for the staff,” and the “greatest single concern” of the park.³⁸

Bakken Oil Boom, 2007-2016

The Bakken oil boom after 2007 dwarfed any of the previous waves of development in western North Dakota and presented unprecedented problems for Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Hundreds of new oil wells surrounded the park, and their accompanying pollution and

³⁶ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report” for 1978, 1979, 1980, and 1986, and “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1982, Addition,” Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library.

³⁷ Chip Brown, “North Dakota Went Boom,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2013, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/03/magazine/north-dakota-went-boom.html?_r=0.

³⁸ Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1977”; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report” for 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2002, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” 20; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1986,” quote; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1994,” quote, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Library; Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapters 3-4; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “General Management Plan,” 10; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Visual Quality Management Guidelines.”

population growth threatened the sense of sanctuary park personnel sought to maintain. The effort to preserve the badlands became a fight to stave off an invading industrial landscape and to keep both an ecosystem and a historic scene while recognizing the arbitrariness of park boundary lines. The Bakken oil boom reinforced the significance of retaining the park's more abstract resources: solitude, vistas, clear air, dark night skies, the gentle sounds of the prairie.

The Bakken oil boom resulted from technological innovations that allowed extraction of “tight” oil from shale in the Bakken Formation of the Williston Basin. Horizontal drilling—sometimes extending three miles from the drill pad—snaked through the relatively narrow layer of oil-holding rock. To fracture the shale layer and release the oil, crews set off explosions in the horizontal cavity and then pumped a slurry of water, chemicals, and sand into the fractures to hold them open. Natural gas and oil rose to the surface under the pressure. This hydraulic fracturing—commonly known as fracking—set off an unprecedented oil boom in western North Dakota. Thousands of newly drilled wells studded the region, and small towns overflowed with oil industry workers. The landscape surrounding Theodore Roosevelt National Park became increasingly industrialized; on thousands of sites, workers cleared pads, constructed new roads to them, erected drill rigs and pump jacks, excavated storage ponds, set up tanks, and flared off natural gasses. In its first year, every new well generated an estimated 2,000 truck trips, many of them made on park roads.³⁹



Trailer parking areas, modular homes, and hastily constructed subdivisions provided housing for the thousands of people who rushed into the area adjacent to the park during the oil boom of the 2010s. 2013. Photo by Jared Orsi.

³⁹ Brown, “North Dakota Went Boom”; National Parks Conservation Association, *National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing: Balancing Energy Needs, Nature, and America’s National Heritage* (Washington D.C.: National Parks Conservation Association, Center for Park Research, 2013), 13; Russell Gold, *The Boom: How Fracking Ignited the American Energy Revolution and Changed the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014); Edwin Dobb, “The New Oil Landscape,” *National Geographic*, March 2013, accessed April 15, 2016. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/03/bakken-shale-oil/dobb-text>.

Taking off just as the nation entered deep recession, rapid resource expansion in the Bakken transformed western North Dakota. As oil companies, drill rigs, and workers poured into the region, North Dakota outstripped growth in any other state. This sharply reversed the state's post-World War II trajectory. Though oil booms had punctuated this era's economy, for the most part, North Dakota had remained a largely rural, agricultural region losing population in each census. Especially in its western sectors, towns were small with aging populations as young people migrated out of the state for better opportunities. But hydraulic fracturing, "fracking," quintupled North Dakota's oil production by 2014. After 2007, the massive influx of exploration and exploitation of Bakken oil brought North Dakota's population to an 80 year high. By 2012, the arrival of 65,000 workers slammed five northwestern counties in particular: Divide, Mountrail, Williams, McKenzie, and Dunn. (Theodore Roosevelt National Park lay near McKenzie and Dunn counties.) Towns at the epicenter like Williston were unprepared for the onslaught. At the heart of the oil patch, Williston grew by 25% between 2010 and 2012. Even smaller, Watford City, near Theodore Roosevelt's North Unit, doubled its population in just three years. Housing all these newcomers became the most critical, immediate issue, and the shortage drove up rents at astonishing rates. In 2013, Williston had one of the highest rents for one-bedroom apartments in the nation. Even in 2015 as the boom began to dissipate, Williston renters paid an average of \$2,220 a month and Watford City residents a whopping \$2,1800. Social services directors recounted senior citizens experiencing a tripling in rent—from \$800 to \$2,400. Vacancy rates fell to 0 percent, and social agencies estimated a 200 percent increase in homelessness between 2010 and 2012, a figure difficult to judge as many seeking work lived in their vehicles, sleeping in parking lots and truck stops. Man camps sprang up on the landscape of the Bakken. Some consisted of vast, neat rows of white camper trailers in established parks, others of informal congregations of tents and vehicles without sewer or running water. Typical of resource booms, social problems accompanied the expansion. County officials faced greatly increased domestic violence, drug use, and crime, overcrowded schools, and inadequate social services.⁴⁰

Accompanying the Bakken boom's demographic consequences was pronounced environmental degradation. By 2014, almost 6,800 wells operated in the Bakken basin. Each required a well pad, a cleared, level site accessible to the massive drill rig and with room for a waste water pond, storage tanks, temporary structures, and later the pump jack. Companies bulldozed a network of roads to these thousands of sites, and tanker trucks and other vehicles drove an average of 2,300 trips to each well throughout its lifetime. This heavy traffic tore up existing roads and raised clouds of dust on graveled back roads, adding to the air pollution emitted from the flaring gas burners. Each well also required an estimated 2 million gallons of water, sucked from the aquifer or the Missouri River and trucked to the well pads. Injections

⁴⁰ Bret A. Weber, Julia Geigle, and Carenlee Barkdull, "Rural North Dakota's Oil Boom and Its Impact on Social Services," *Social Work*, 59 (January 2014) 1: 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, accessed 2-21-2016. At https://www.acosa.org/joomla/pdf/Weber_et_al.pdf; Brown, "North Dakota Went Boom"; Melanie D.G. Kaplan, "Drilling Down," National Parks Conservation Association, accessed October 26, 2016. At <https://www.npca.org/articles/958-drilling-down>; Emily Guerin, "Why Oil Workers Are Still Paying \$600 To Live In A Closet," *Inside Energy*, 31 March 2015, accessed October 26, 2016. At <http://insideenergy.org/2015/03/31/why-oil-workers-are-still-paying-600-to-live-in-a-closet/>; J. Christian Jensen, "Two North Dakota kids explain the Bakken boom," *High Country News*, 21 February 2014, accessed Oct. 26, 2016. At <http://www.hcn.org/articles/two-north-dakota-kids-explain-the-bakken-boom>.

wells sank the chemical- laden waste water back into the earth, potentially contaminating ground water. Spills and illegal dumping of the briny, toxic fluid decimated waterways and fields. Barrels of oil leaked from miles of pipelines into the North Dakota countryside. So long dominated by agriculture, in a few short years western North Dakota transformed into a petroleum-producing powerhouse with all its attendant environmental problems.⁴¹

The Fort Berthold Reservation sat squarely on top of the Bakken formation and perhaps as much as three to four hundred billion barrels of oil. Here, the social and environmental consequences of rampant oil extraction in an undeveloped, isolated landscape showed most starkly. Home to the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (MHA), called the Three Affiliated Tribes by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the reservation comprised a tiny portion of the original 1851 territory given them in the Fort Laramie Treaty. By the twentieth century, through treaties and allotment, the federal government had carved down the reserve to about a million acres that included the fertile bottom lands along both sides of the Missouri River and the high plains above the waterway. Despite the devastation of past epidemics, of imposed reservation life and federal government domination, and of re-occurring drought, the MHA Nation managed to create communities and sustain themselves through agriculture, coming close to “complete economic independence” by 1949. That year, however, the Pick-Sloan Project by the Army Corp of Engineers devastated the tribes’ recovery when it began inundating 152,000 acres of their most productive farmlands behind Garrison Dam. Along with losing over a quarter of their reservation, the people lost sacred sites, administrative headquarters, hospitals, schools, and access to crucial natural resources and habitats. Throughout the early 1950s, about 80 percent of their members (325 families) were forced out of established communities onto dispersed sites along the upper prairies. Struggling and in crisis, the three tribes gradually worked toward stability throughout the 1960s to 1990s. But the MHA Nation did not benefit from the regional oil booms of the 1950s, 1970s, or 1990s, though experts suspected the lake of oil beneath the reservation. Complicated land ownership and BIA management discouraged development. With

⁴¹ Emily Guerin, “Bakken Oil trucks can kick up carcinogenic dust similar to asbestos,” *High Country News*, 21 January 2014, accessed October 26, 2016. At <http://www.hcn.org/blogs/goat/bakken-oil-trucks-kick-up-carcinogenic-material-thats-a-threat-to-human-health>; Ernest Scheyder, “Fracking boom triggers water battle in North Dakota,” *Reuters*, 20 May 2013, accessed October 29, 2016, http://investigations.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/05/20/18376353-fracking-boom-triggers-water-battle-in-north-dakota; Nicholas Kusnetz, ProPublica, “North Dakota Turns Blind Eye to Dumping of Fracking Waste in Waterways and Farmland,” *Inside Climate News*, 8 June 2012, accessed October 29, 2016, at <https://insideclimatenews.org/forward?path=news/20120608/oil-companies-north-dakota-boom-gas-drilling-fracking-wastewater-waterways-pollution-dumpinggrounds&overlay=cbox&width=600&height=600&className=forward-box&scrolling=true&maxWidth=100%25>; Deborah Sontag and Robert Gebeloff, “The Downside of the Boom,” *New York Times*, 22 November 2014, accessed October 29, 2016, at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/11/23/us/north-dakota-oil-boom-downside.html?_r=0.

40 percent unemployment among the 5,000 people who lived on the reservation, MHA Nation remained poor and the landscape rural, isolated, and agricultural.⁴²

That all changed after 2007; fracking in the Bakken brought the Fort Berthold Reservation into the oil boom economy with astonishing swiftness. New laws and policies streamlined the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribes' abilities to acquire leases. By 2009, reservation land was almost entirely leased for oil extraction, and by 2010, Fort Berthold was in the throes of the boom. Thousands of workers flooded into tribal lands to open hundreds of wells. In 2016, 1,426 active wells on the reservation produced 17 percent of all oil flowing from North Dakota and generated \$760 million. Some of the wealth trickled down to tribal members, more to the tribal government, and one-half of tax revenues to the state of North Dakota. Unemployment dropped to 10 percent in 2012. With oil money, MHA Nation leaders made moves toward increasing tribal sovereignty. They formed tribal enterprises such as tribally-chartered oil companies and the MHA Nation Clean Fuels Refinery that acquired federal approval to build a plant on reservation land in 2012. Like the rest of western North Dakota, the reservation's economy shifted to an industrial base.⁴³

Fort Berthold paid a high cost for the Bakken boom. The decades of dislocation and poverty, the lack of infrastructure, and the complex relationship between tribal, state, and federal governments left tribal authorities unprepared for the influx of workers, the man camps, the homelessness, and the increase in crime, drug abuse, and domestic abuse. Demands swamped the tribes' health and social services, and the American Indian nation's inability to enforce laws on non-tribal members exacerbated a lawlessness and corruption typically associated with boom economies. The rampant development and the lack of effective oversight heightened environmental problems. Heavy truck traffic hammered inadequate reservation roads, raising dense clouds of dust; oil and highly-saline, toxic waste waters spills contaminated reservation land and coulees—767 known events between 2008 and 2016. Illegally dumped radioactive “socks,” devices for filtering fracking fluids before injection into the ground, littered the reserve.

⁴² Raymond Cross, “Development’s Victim or its Beneficiary?: The Impact of Oil and Gas Development on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation,” *North Dakota Law Review*, 87 (2011): 538, 541-4, quote on 544, accessed October 26, 2016, at http://scholarship.law.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1075&context=faculty_lawreviews; “The History and Culture of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Sahnish,” *North Dakota Studies*, accessed October 26, 2016, at http://www.ndstudies.org/resources/IndianStudies/threeaffiliated/historical_1900s_garrison.html; Sierra Crane-Murdoch, “The Other Bakken Boom: America’s biggest oil rush brings tribal conflict,” *High Country News*, 23 April 2012, accessed October 26, 2016, at <http://www.hcn.org/issues/44.6/on-the-fort-berthold-reservation-the-bakken-boom-brings-conflict/view>.

⁴³ Crane-Murdoch, “The Other Bakken Boom: America’s biggest oil rush brings tribal conflict”; Matthew Frank, “Oil bust puts tribes, towns over a barrel,” *High Country News*, 17 March 2016, accessed October 29, 2016, at <http://www.hcn.org/articles/oil-bust-puts-tribes-towns-over-a-barrel>; U.S. Department of the Interior, “Interior Approves Fort Berthold Land Trust Application for New Refinery in North Dakota,” News Release, 10 October 2012, accessed October 19, 2016, at <http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/text/idc-022703.pdf>; Eloise Ogden, “American Indian tribe changes plans amid drop in oil prices,” *Washington Times*, 8 November 2015, accessed October 29, 2016, at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/nov/8/american-indian-tribe-changes-plans-amid-drop-in-o/>

Indiscriminate flaring polluted the air and sparked fires. The reservation was an exaggerated microcosm of the region's transformations from exploitation of the Bakken field.⁴⁴

Unable to penetrate Theodore Roosevelt to extract oil as it had Fort Berthold Reservation, the fracking bonanza besieged the park. By 2016, western North Dakota fields contained more than 10,000 wells. Because the park lay in the middle of the Bakken, oil rigs seeking the richest deposits bumped up against its boundaries. In the McKenzie Ranger District of the Little Missouri National Grasslands, directly abutting the park, 340 installations—well pads with tanks, buildings, ponds, pumpjacks--and 800 miles of pipeline proliferated. Dozens of these structures were visible from the bluffs of Theodore Roosevelt. Some drillers proposed to sink wells within only several hundred feet of the Elkhorn Ranch, prompting the National Trust for Historic Preservation to list it as one of the nation's most endangered places. Yet, from a bird's eye view, the park units remained islands of pre-industrial lands, its fences a dividing line between the park's remnant badlands and industrial advancement.⁴⁵

On the ground, though, Theodore Roosevelt could not hold at bay the encroaching petrochemical development. It dominated the work of park personnel as they responded to dozens of drilling permit applications on lands surrounding the park while negotiating their new personal realities of drastically increased rents, deteriorated and crowded highways, and competition with oil-field migrants for local supplies and services. Oil people flooded into the park units, bringing with them the problems of a boom-time economy, and rangers dealt with increasing crime and social problems like drug use. Some visitors harmed park resources; they drove off-road, sped through wildlife zones, illegally fired weapons, and defaced and damaged the stones. In the North Unit, someone shot and killed one of the park's buffalo. It was "'colossal mess,'" lamented long-time employee and local rancher, John Heiser.⁴⁶

Theodore Roosevelt was part of a larger ecosystem that extended beyond the park's arbitrary boundaries. Fracking extraction fragmented the grasslands around Theodore Roosevelt with a network of busy, dusty new roads and hundreds of noisy, lighted well pads. These

⁴⁴ Sierra Crane-Murdoch, "On Indian Land, Criminals Can Get Away With Almost Anything," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 22 February 2013, accessed October 29, 2016, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/on-indian-land-criminals-can-get-away-with-almost-anything/273391/>; Crane-Murdoch, "The Other Bakken Boom"; Frank, "Oil bust puts tribes, towns over a barrel"; Deborah Sontag and Robert Gebeloff, "The Downside of the Boom," *New York Times*, 22 November 2014, accessed October 26, 2016, at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/11/23/us/north-dakota-oil-boom-downside.html?_r=0; Deborah Sontag and Brent McDonald, "In North Dakota, a Tale of Oil, Corruption and Death," *New York Times*, 28 December 2014, accessed October 26, 2016, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/in-north-dakota-where-oil-corruption-and-bodies-surface.html>; Lauren Donovan, "[T]ribe warns that children might play with illegally dumped filter socks," *Bismarck Tribune*, 5 March 2013, accessed November 1, 2016, at http://bismarcktribune.com/bakken/tribe-warns-that-children-might-play-with-illegally-dumped-filter/article_1937f2a2-85ce-11e2-8878-001a4bcf887a.html.

⁴⁵ Frank, "Oil bust puts tribes, towns over a barrel"; Sierra Crane-Murdoch, "A defender of North Dakota's badlands wonders if it's time to leave," *High Country News*, 27 April 2015, accessed October 26, 2016, at <http://www.hcn.org/issues/47.7/as-oil-drilling-approaches-north-dakotas-badlands-their-most-ardent-defender-wonders-if-its-time-to-leave>; Center for Park Research, National Parks Conservation Association, "National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing: Case Study Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota," accessed November 4, 2016, at <https://www.npca.org/resources/2663-national-parks-and-hydraulic-fracturing>.

⁴⁶ Kaplan, "Drilling Down"; Crane-Murdoch, "A defender of North Dakota's badlands wonders if it's time to leave," quote.

destroyed habitat and altered migration patterns of animals like pronghorn, deer, and birds that migrated in and out of the park. The sounds of heavy truck traffic, drilling machinery, compressors, and whoshing flaring emanated into Theodore Roosevelt. Flaring gas from well sites illuminated the park's famously dark night skies. All around, the sights, sounds, and smells of industrial America compromised the park's mandate to preserve an untrammelled landscape, a slice of primitive America. As park chief of resource management, Bill Whitworth noted," the point of wilderness is to remove yourself from the impact of human settlement...and the oil and gas industry has taken that away."⁴⁷

Under these intense pressures, Theodore Roosevelt National Park administrators' emphasis on resource protection shifted to a different set of resources that were both natural and cultural. A major concern was air quality. Fracking sent soot, dirt, and pollutants into the air, creating a haze that limited visibility. Until the 1980s, the park's air quality had been "excellent," but after 1982, it became the park's top resource concern. In 1974, researchers had begun monitoring air quality and the clarity of park vistas. In 1977, under an amendment of the Clean Air Act, the park's air achieved Class I categorization, which meant it had the highest priority for prevention of air quality degradation. Greatly concerned about preserving the clarity of its air after the Bakken boom, in 2013, Theodore Roosevelt initiated more intensive air monitoring, though solutions to prevent further harm remained elusive. The Clean Air also required that vistas be considered, and the first vista inventory took place in 1980. An in-depth Visual Quality Management Guidelines report in 1991 more comprehensively studied the effects of regional energy extraction on the park's resources. It identified viewsheds, rated their comparative value, and proposed possible mitigation strategies. The purity of the park's air and its expansive views defined the park's environment as much as the bison that roamed its Badlands.⁴⁸

The hydraulic fracturing boom intensified focus on Theodore Roosevelt's less tangible resources. Two contemporary studies further delineated park resources damaged by fracking in the Bakken. A 2013 park-wide report by the National Parks Conservation Association, *National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing*, identified habitat fragmentation and loss, noise pollution, intrusions on viewscapes, destruction of dark night skies, and diminution of water quality along with air pollution as deleterious effects of fracking. A 2014 Natural Resource Condition Assessment report for Theodore Roosevelt National Park reiterated national concerns at the park level. Along with invasive plant species, the document concluded that the exponentially increased oil and gas production and especially air pollution from the industry were the greatest stressors on park resources. In particular, it noted that the damaging effects on viewscapes,

⁴⁷ Center for Park Research, National Parks Conservation Association, "National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing: Balancing Energy Needs, Nature, and America's National Heritage," accessed October 8, 2015, at <https://www.npca.org/resources/2663-national-parks-and-hydraulic-fracturing>; quote in "Drilling Down."

⁴⁸ Harmon, *Open Margin*, Chapter 6; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1982"; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "General Management Plan," 8; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Visual Quality Management Guidelines."; Phil Taylor, "Air Pollution: Bakken boom linked to haze at Theodore Roosevelt Park," E & E Publishing, accessed October 26, 2016, at <http://www.eenews.net/stories/1059990151>.

soundscapes, and air quality.⁴⁹ Such resources maintained more abstract qualities that visitors expected in a natural park that represented both a vignette of primitive America and Teddy Roosevelt's nineteenth-century Badlands experience: the solitude, quiet, and isolation of the prairie, the sense of vast openness, and the experience of a black, starlit night.

Conclusion

Just as the National Park Service entered the age of ecology, in 1978, Theodore Roosevelt National Park acquired a new mission that assumed it could create a wilderness landscape. Now managing a natural park, its administrators sought to preserve a piece of the Badlands landscape, its flora, its fauna, and its aesthetic qualities of solitude, remoteness, and expansiveness. The larger National Park Service shift to ecosystems management helped the North Dakota park in its efforts. As it reoriented away from privileging Mission 66-type tourist development and toward environmental protection, developments in the surrounding region forced agency managers to look beyond park boundaries. Harmful effects of fossil fuel extraction redefined resource values and illuminated the reality that Theodore Roosevelt National Park existed within a larger ecosystem. Though transgressing plants, animals, and pollutants blurred its border, the park attempted to keep out the intrusions of oil production.

The oil booms impelled park personnel to fight for a different set of resources than it had emphasized while a memorial park. The park continued to value its few historic remains, flora, fauna, and environment, but the definition of "resource" expanded. The noise, odor, and visual intrusions from oil, gas, and coal development "conflicted with the solitude and natural scene of the park." The most valued resources in the face of these external threats were the park's "rural ambience," "solitude," "remoteness," and "sensory experience" that allowed an empathetic understanding of the landscape Theodore Roosevelt knew in the late nineteenth century. The natural and historic scene overlapped. In this regard, today, Theodore Roosevelt National Park is more than simply a natural park with large areas of wilderness; it is a cultural landscape where the value of all of its resources are both natural and cultural.

⁴⁹ National Parks Conservation Association, *National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing*; Shannon Amberg, et al., *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Natural Resource Condition Assessment. Natural Resource Report NPS/THRO/NRR—2014/776* (Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, February 2014), 243.

Conclusion

Hannah Braun

The stunning landscape of Theodore Roosevelt National Park contains a rich ecology that has drawn humans to the Little Missouri Badlands for centuries. From the first peoples who came to quarry Knife River flint, to fur traders, ranchers, and homesteaders, to the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, to the workers on the Bakken oil fields, people have used, commodified, and transformed the region's environment. Each group came to the area with its own vision for how to adapt the landscape and its natural resources for their purposes. These visions quickly came into competition with each other. In such a remote and rugged landscape, not every vision could flourish successfully alongside the others.

The first peoples to live in and use the Little Missouri Badlands and the area now encompassed by Theodore Roosevelt National Park were diverse but shared many common understandings of their relationship to each other and to the land. Whether they were sedentary farmers like the Mandans or nomadic hunters like the Lakotas, they generally understood themselves and other peoples as part of the land. They lived in a big world that made the most of local abundance and drew resources from afar to provide whatever was not nearby. They changed the land in the process, but most frequently lived within its constraints, including the law of the minimum. They grew corn, hunted bison, trapped eagles, and traded with each other and with distant peoples. Though intertribal relations were competitive and often violent, American Indians' vision for the land accommodated shifting, imprecise boundaries and resource use by multiple parties, which differed markedly from subsequent Euro-American ideals of bounded property controlled by individual or national sovereigns.

When Euro-Americans arrived on the Northern Plains, they attempted to impose a distinct vision on the land. Like the tribes, they understood the value of commercial relationships and energetically sought to benefit from long-distance trade, but their understandings of these things also differed considerably from those of the long-time inhabitants. Tribes viewed social and commercial relationships as inter-connected through hospitality and an on-going cycle of obligation. Whites, however, viewed fur, bison, wood, and other resources as raw materials to purchase in an exchange that left both parties satisfied and neither in the other's debt. American Indians prized trade arrangements with multiple parties, while the Euro-Americans attempted to restrict local people to trading only with them. Initially, white traders, trappers, and explorers depended upon local villagers for the basic supplies needed for survival on the Northern Plains. However, Americans gradually solidified national trade routes and developed ways to transport goods from the East far out onto the prairies, and in the process made American Indians dependent upon them. Once able to function independently on the Plains, Euro-Americans could unilaterally impose their rules on trade with American Indians. The newcomers enforced trade agreements and treaties, denuded riparian forests, slaughtered wild game, and brought disease, which forced villages to turn to whites for annuities and assistance.

By the time Theodore Roosevelt arrived in the Little Missouri Badlands in 1883, the American Indians who had once called the area home were now living on reservations, their

ideals for the land defeated by the white man's vision. Although the fur trade had ended, whites continued to flock to the Northern Plains as the demand for bison hides and the masculine obsession with sporting provided new outlets for exploiting the Plains. When the bison were gone, men discovered that the rich prairie grasses would make excellent feed for livestock, and so the cattle industry boomed. The vision of ranchers like Theodore Roosevelt was to transform the landscape into a cattle empire, making use of emerging railroad connections to ship slaughtered meat to the East. The process of commodification that had begun with the fur trade in the early 1800s continued in the 1880s, as ranchers extracted the resources of the plains hinterland, infused them with commercial value, and transported them to urban markets in the East. This growth of American capitalism meant the expansion of national and even global commerce.

However, the environment could not support such rampantly extractive practices, and white Americans faced defeat in their attempts to force the landscape to fit the mold of their capitalist vision. Theodore Roosevelt and his fellow ranchers discovered this during the winter of 1886-1887, when severe blizzards and frigid temperatures killed up to 80 percent of the cattle on the Great Plains. The ranchers' dreams of a cattle empire were no match for the environment's fickle, harsh weather. When the ranchers went bust, homesteaders took their place, hoping that a landscape that could not support vast herds of livestock would allow crops of corn and wheat to flourish. Some settlers managed to hang on despite the rugged environment, but economic collapse and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s forced many homesteaders to admit that the climate was not as suited to farming as they had hoped. Many farmers sold their land to the federal government and left North Dakota for brighter futures elsewhere.

The federal government came to the Little Missouri Badlands in the 1930s through its take-over of abandoned farms and development of the Theodore Roosevelt Recreation Demonstration Area, and ushered in a new vision for western North Dakota. Young workers found employment with the Civilian Conservation Corps making improvements to the area where Roosevelt once ranched. Increasingly, people began to see the landscape as historically significant to the saga of the American people, particularly through the life and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt. When Congress designated the area as Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in 1947, it was promoting a conservation ethic that Roosevelt himself had championed during his political career following his stint at North Dakota ranching. Throughout his presidency, Roosevelt had pushed for the preservation of American landscapes, fearing that their continued development and exploitation would result in the despoiling the nation's natural resources and some of its most iconic places. Roosevelt had come to North Dakota as a capitalist, and his engagement in bison hunting and cattle ranching had fit within the nineteenth century America's vision of commercialized markets and commodification of raw materials. Yet something about his time in the Badlands changed Roosevelt, and his conservation ethic, which led to the passing of the Antiquities Act and the designation of numerous national parks and monuments, shaped a new vision for how Americans viewed their landscapes. It was this vision that guided the designation of a park in North Dakota years later that bore the former president's name.

As a new vision of conservation and tourism in western North Dakota took form under National Park Service oversight, many challenges emerged to complicate that ideal. The boom in

tourism after World War II and the high modernist movement shaped Park Service visions of how to use and manage landscapes. The Mission 66 program, with its focus on utilitarianism, flow and circulation, and delineation of uses, transformed the infrastructure and layout of units like Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park for visitors. Simultaneously, the park struggled with its mission to preserve the area as a historic memorial park primarily dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt's time in the Badlands. As the nation experienced a push toward implementation of scientific management practices, the National Park Service began to expand its mission and vision for park units by embracing a call not only to care for its cultural resources, but also to manage its natural resources using scientific and ecological techniques. Dealing with a reintroduced bison herd, managing animal migration and population patterns, and addressing the issue of exotic and invasive species began to increasingly take up park staff time. A signal of this shift in vision and priority came in 1978 when Congress changed the designation of the memorial park to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. As part of this name change, Congress also designated nearly one third of the park as wilderness, indicating a stronger natural resource vision. As the Park Service embraced its redefined mission to protect the park's natural resources, flora and fauna, and viewsheds, the nation's continued capitalist extractive vision threatened this ideal. The oil and gas industry in North Dakota experienced exponential growth beginning in 2006 with the Bakken oil field boom. This has forced the National Park Service to address urgent issues such as the establishment of oil wells adjacent to park borders, the increase in oil field traffic along transportation corridors, and the detrimental effects of the oil industry on the quality of water, air, sound, and night skies. Balancing its vision for the preservation and conservation of the natural and cultural landscape of the park with the industrial changes on its borders remains an on-going challenge for the National Park Service at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Today, visitors to Theodore Roosevelt National Park encounter a rich landscape steeped in history and the experiences of a diverse spectrum of peoples. From the first Plains peoples to today's North Dakota residents, humans have encountered a challenging environment. All have modified substantially, and all have used it to survive and even flourish. Each group has enacted its visions, ideals, and hopes upon its canvas. Not every vision succeeded in this rugged place, and few of them were imposed without substantial modification along the way. Often one set of ideals failed, only for another to overtake it. Even though the visions enacted upon the landscape have not always endured, there has been one constant in the Little Missouri Badlands. This place, remote, isolated, and relatively untouched as it may seem, has for centuries been a major thoroughfare, an epicenter of human activity. Never a self-contained world even for the earliest Plains hunters, it continuously expanded and grew ever more interconnected to other places. As it achieved regional, national, and even global importance, this corner of North Dakota became a place where trade among tribes and Euro-Americans flourished, where raw materials fed an industrializing nation, and where the extraction of natural resources fueled a global economy. It also has drawn people who have sought rest, fun, wisdom, and beauty. This dynamic history infuses the story of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and waits for visitors to encounter it. At the same time, visitors can also experience the quiet, wide-open lands of buttes, prairies, and river valleys that so captivated and inspired the people who have dwelt in and traversed this area for centuries. Though highly modified, and sometimes even seriously threatened, the Little Missouri Bandlands retain much of value. Theodore Roosevelt himself explained this well:

Nowhere, not even at sea, does a man feel more lonely than when riding over the far-reaching, seemingly never-ending plains; and after a man has lived a little while on or near them, their very vastness and loneliness and their melancholy monotony have a strong fascination for him. The landscape seems always the same, and after the traveler has plodded on for miles and miles he gets to feel as if the distance was indeed boundless. As far as the eye can see there is no break; either the prairie stretches out into perfectly level flats, or else there are gentle, rolling slopes, whose crests mark the divides between the drainage systems of the different creeks; and when one of these is ascended, immediately another precisely like it takes its place in the distance, and so roll succeeds roll in a succession as interminable as that of the waves of the ocean.¹

¹Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman & Hunting Trips on the Prairie and in the Mountains* (New York: Review of Reviews Company, 1904), 216.

Appendix A

Resources Master List

Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Immediate Vicinity

Maren Bzdek

Overview

This section provides a summary reference list of the resources discussed in their historical context in this study and a list of prioritized recommendations for recognizing, documenting, and managing the extant historic resources. The criteria for selection were developed based on an integrated resource management approach that transcends traditional definitions that separate “cultural” and “natural” resource categories. It also reflects the evolution of how the park has been managed since it was established in 1947. As Janet Ore argues in Chapter 7 of this report, the original park mission “interpreted an abstraction, the influence of the Badlands on Roosevelt’s conservation ethic, with little historical material. Only the environment and its inhabitants remained as artifacts to tell the story.” The history of the park is one of humans interacting with nature, subsisting from nature, taking inspiration from nature, and exploiting nature for the market and thus any list of historic resources about this place must include elements of the natural world that have existed over time in order to be complete. In its current incarnation as Theodore Roosevelt National Park, the National Park Service manages resources based on a mission more explicitly tied to scientific resource stewardship. Because this list has a practical purpose for contemporary managers it emphasizes extant physical sites, features, and species that require management, study, interpretation, and protection.

Recommendations

The resources discussed in park management-era chapters were products of National Park Service activities. Their significance is tied to the agency’s policies and programs, which reflect national trends in Modernist design and the rise of comprehensive planning, and the effects of those policies and programs on the physical environment within the park boundaries in each of the three units and on their borders. For example, the structures listed here were built by the National Park Service and together comprise a well-documented collection of manmade and natural features that were designed and constructed as part of a national development program characteristic of the Mission 66 era. Many of these structures are now reaching 50 years in age and should be evaluated for potential listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While some of these individual resources are humble in both function and design, they are part of designed landscapes within which each element contributes to the larger whole and thus they should be managed that potential significance in mind until they can be fully evaluated and documented.

- A. Establish Mission 66 National Register Districts.
 - 1) South Unit Mission 66 District
 - 2) North Unit Mission 66 District
 - 3) Include a landscape approach to ensure that natural features associated with the built environment are included, which provides opportunity for integrated resource management.
- B. Assess and List Archeological Sites.
 - 1) List sites already determined to be eligible on the National Register
 - 2) Complete determinations of eligibility for sites that have been deemed as potentially eligible; list eligible sites on the National Register
- C. Document Cultural Landscapes.
 - 1) THRO should undertake a full cultural landscape inventory (CLI) and a cultural landscape report (CLR) to identify the various cultural landscapes within the boundary and develop management plans for each of them.
- D. Update the draft Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).
 - 1) Update the existing MPDF to include archeology and more recent cultural resources, including Mission 66.
 - 2) Work with the SHPO to approve the MPDF.
 - 3) Consider the potential eligibility of the 1970s buildings to clarify their eligibility in the next ten years and incorporate that information into facilities and maintenance planning.
 - 4) Include a landscape approach to ensure that natural features associated with the built environment are included, which provides opportunity for integrated resource management.
 - 5) Revisit and complete listings for the existing National Register drafts. Include a landscape approach to ensure that natural features associated with the built environment are included, which provides opportunity for integrated resource management.
 - 6) Update existing National Register listings, as needed. For example, the Peaceful Valley listing includes only three eligible buildings, but with the passage of time more structures maybe considered contributing today. As with all assessments, include a landscape approach to ensure that natural features associated with the built environment are included, which provides opportunity for integrated resource management.

<u>RESOURCE CATEGORY (Alphabetical Order)</u>	<u>Chapters</u>	<u>National Register Documentation</u>
<p>De Mores Packing Plant Ruins (not within NPS boundary)</p> <p>In 1883, the Marquis de Mores built an abattoir (slaughterhouse) that employed refrigerated railcars and linked the local cattle market to refrigeration stations across the Northern Plains, shipped via his Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company. The site included a packing plant, slaughterhouse, three icehouses, a corral, several outbuildings, and a railroad spur track and operated until 1886. While the plant building burned in 1907, the native clay brick chimney and foundations remain to mark the site on the west edge of the town of Medora. The property was acquired in 1936 by the State Historical Society. Although not an NPS-managed resource, its proximity to the visitor center and historical importance to the cattle industry provide a rationale for mention in NPS interpretive material, particularly because extant historic resources are limited within the park boundaries.</p>	3	<p>National Register: 2/18/1975 (75001300)</p> <p>Criteria: A</p> <p>Significance: Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture</p> <p>Period of Significance: 1875-1899</p>
<p>Agricultural Fields/Plots</p> <p>In the early twentieth century, mechanization and scientific developments in agriculture, WWI food demand, and federal programs to build and subsidize farming on the plains made possible the cultivation of upland prairie for wheat production in the Badlands region. Homesteaders also planted winter-feed crops in the bottomlands. In Billings County, the September 1908 issue of <i>North Dakota</i> magazine reported a harvest of 5,472 acres of wheat, 8,383 acres of oats, and 8,315 acres of flax for that year.² In that county, farms increased from 38 1,000-acre or larger farms in 1910 to 93 farms of the same acreage in 1920.³ Eventually, 9 million acres of Badlands prairie, including acreage in the North and South units of the park, were cultivated for wheat fields, hay, alfalfa, and oats.⁴ By the end of the homesteading era, in the late 1920s, 49 percent of all harvested crops in the badlands were wheat. In 1933, at the height of the dust bowl and four years into the Great Depression, the harvested acreage of wheat rose to 70 percent.⁵</p>	5	N/A

² Joseph L. Gavett, *North Dakota Counties: Towns and Peoples*, Part III, 2009.

³ "Large Land Holdings in North Dakota," pg 411, Alva Benton. *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Oct., 1925), pp. 405-413

⁴ Interview with Lena Halliday, August 19, 1970 (set of papers John returned), pg 8

⁵ McKenzie County, *North Dakota Soil Survey*, Series 1933, No. 37, Issued March 1942. U.S. Dept of Agriculture, pg 15.

<p>Archeological Sites</p> <p>Three hundred and fifteen archeological sites located within Theodore Roosevelt National Park have been identified and registered in the Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS). Sixty-one sites are historic sites associated with indigenous groups or European-American homesteading and ranching.⁶</p> <p>Zedeño's 2006 ethnographic study indicates that archeological research within park boundaries began in THRO in 1950 with studies of historical sites by Beaubien and Taylor. After 1968, archeological work within the park investigated prehistoric sites, including stone circles, artifact scatters, rock shelters, conical timbered lodges, eagle traps, cairns, kill sites, and isolated finds. The works of Beckes and Keyser (1983) and Gregg and Davidson (1985) synthesize the studies into a regional cultural chronology for western North Dakota. David Kuehn's three-year survey in the late 1980s identified 269 cultural resources sites located near the park's trails, roads, utility corridors, and springs dating from the Early Archaic to historic periods (Kuehn 1989; Kuehn 1990).⁷</p>		<p>For those sites that have been evaluated for National Register listing, one is listed, three are eligible, 60 are ineligible, and 48 have been nominated for listing or recommended as eligible for listing.</p>
<p>Artesian wells and springs</p> <p>There are ten documented developed springs and fifteen flowing wells inside the park boundaries, and many others that are not documented. The wheat bonanza of the 1910s represented the peak use of water sources in the vicinity of THRO.</p> <p><i>North Unit Artesian Wells and Springs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Macdal ➤ Hagan (Sec 22) ➤ Overlook (Sec 28W) ➤ Stevens (Sec 28E) ➤ Achenbach Springs (Sec 3) ➤ Unnamed spring near Higgins homestead (Sec 6) <p><i>South Unit Artesian Wells and Springs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Halliday ➤ Rasmussen/Cottonwood Campground (1914) 	5	N/A

⁶ Maria Zedeño et. al., "Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota," prepared for the National Park Service, Midwest Region (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2006), 56.

⁷ Zedeño et al, "Cultural Affiliation Statement," 56.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Boicourt and Eckblum homesteads (free-flowing springs) ➤ Big Plateau Springs (Sec 2, T140N, R102W) ➤ Sheep Butte Springs (Sec 12, T140N, R101W) 		
<p>Badlands landscape (buttes, coulees, valleys)</p> <p>Draws and bottomlands were important sites for indigenous people to find resources and shelter to survive in the harsh landscape. The dramatic geological features served as wayfinding sites, spiritual retreats, and vision quest locales.</p> <p>White travelers through the region in the pre-settlement era found the landscape intimidating and sometimes dangerous. In the Battle of the Badlands, General Sully referred to the landscape as “hell with the fires out.” But the dramatic Badlands landscape—especially the terrain accentuated with buttes and their attendant collection of valleys and coulees—was central to both Roosevelt’s veneration of the region and the cattle industry. Roosevelt wrote of how “Cold red bars in the winter sky marked where the sun had gone down behind a row of jagged, snow-covered buttes,” and how desolate and monolithic the landscape seemed, especially at night. Just as important, ranchers felt that the valleys and coulees which are central to badlands topography would provide their cattle with winter shelter. In 1886-87, though, the snow piled so high that cattle became trapped in coulees where they took shelter and were buried alive.</p> <p>After Roosevelt died in 1919, locals and government officials began advocating for a memorial park in the region to boost tourism. The park would emphasize the exceptional scenery, recreational opportunities, and potential for a wild game reserve. In particular, the Little Missouri Canyon would be the highlight of an auto tour that highlighted geological formations and other points of interest.</p> <p>The establishment of Theodore Roosevelt Memorial National Park fulfilled this vision and the NPS engineered access to the area’s scenic vistas with carefully considered placement of roads and wayside overlooks. In the Mission 66 era, the delineation of management zones began to differentiate front country, developed “Zone 1” sites with “Zone 2” backcountry regions that approximated and simplified a full portrayal of a late-nineteenth century Badlands environment. In the modern era of park management, the scenic badlands and the petrified tree stumps and lignite vein became identified geological resources to be protected and conserved.</p>	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8	N/A

<p>Beaver</p> <p>Beavers hunted along the region's watersheds in the late 18th/early 19th century represented commodity goods for Eastern markets to trappers and traders, while indigenous people traded them to acquire Euro-American goods. Their population declined dramatically in that era, as did their significant influence on the environment. As men began to prefer silk top hats to beaver pelt hats in the 1820s and 1830s, the price of beaver pelts dropped by two thirds and bison hides became the major commodity on the Northern Plains.</p> <p>Beavers had recovered enough by the 1880s for ranchers to note their presence in the local environment. Anecdotal lore about animal behavior linked to the harsh winter of 1886-87 included beaver collecting unusually large quantities of wood for dams as it approached.</p> <p>Beaver are present in all three park units today. The availability of timber in many areas limits beaver numbers and due to the lack of perennial streams many beaver construct their lodges inside the streambanks of the little Missouri River. There are some "traditional "stick and mud" lodges and dams, but they tend to be in sections of the tributaries close to the main river.</p>	2, 3	N/A
<p>Birds, Native</p> <p>Theodore Roosevelt observations from the 1880s:</p> <p><i>"Spring would not be spring without bird songs, any more than it would be spring without buds and flowers, and I only wish that besides protecting the songsters, the birds of the grove, the orchard, the garden and the meadow, we could also protect the birds of the sea-shore and of the wilderness."</i></p> <p><i>"One of our sweetest, loudest songsters is the meadow-lark...the plains air seems to give it a voice, and it will perch on the top of a bush or tree and sing for hours in rich, bubbling tones."</i></p> <p><i>"They have a funny habit of gravely bowing or posturing at the passer-by, and stand up very erect on their legs." -- Theodore Roosevelt on burrowing owls</i></p> <p><i>"Magpies are birds that catch the eye at once from their bold black and white plumage and long tails; and they are very saucy and at the same time very cunning and shy."</i></p> <p><i>"One bleak March day . . . a flock of snow-buntings came ... Every few moments one of them would mount into the air, hovering about with quivering wings and warbling a loud, merry song with some very sweet notes. They were a most welcome little group of guests,</i></p>	5	N/A

<p><i>and we were sorry when, after loitering around a day or two, they disappeared toward their breeding haunts."</i></p> <p><i>"The little owls call to each other with tremulous, quavering voices throughout the livelong night, as they sit in the creaking trees."</i></p> <p>Of the many bird species native to the area, Roosevelt noted several in his writings about time spent in the area. Bird species populations, like other wildlife, fluctuated over time due to human activity. For example, Western grouse numbers declined in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as hunting of the species to supply local and eastern markets grew. Under federal management and habitat restoration efforts that include grazing, weed control, and prescribed fire, birds of many species are prevalent in the park today. Year round species include golden eagles, wild turkeys, black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, and great-horned owls, among others. Migratory species of birds that visit the park include sandhill cranes, white-throated sparrows, flycatchers, warblers, swallows, juncos, redpolls, and many others.</p>		
<p>Bison</p> <p>Bison hunting replaced beaver trapping as the major market commodity as beaver felt hats fell out of fashion and demand for leather to serve as machinery belts grew with rapid industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century.</p> <p>Although their numbers were greatly diminished by the 1880s, bison-hunting for sport drew Roosevelt to the Badlands and his hunts occurred both within and around present day park boundaries. Roosevelt's time in the Dakotas inspired his conservation efforts, which included a program for preserving and reintroducing bison to areas of the US where they had been eliminated. The offspring of these conserved bison live on today. The Badlands were integral in starting that legacy.</p> <p>Roosevelt and other ranchers commented on the accumulation of skulls from animals like bison and longhorn cattle in the wake of mass extirpations. He referred to the loss of the bison herds as "a veritable tragedy." Bison hunters and ranchers guided their stock along the path to commoditization differently. Bison hunters killed a wild animal, while ranchers grew a domestic one. But both hunters and stockmen brought dramatic change to the Badlands' ecosystem by cutting corners, creating inefficiencies and exhaustion of the resources they depended on. The presence in the Badlands of this shortsighted, profit-centric attitude could be driven home through displays of bison and cattle skulls. These artifacts are ubiquitous to the West but are rarely meditated upon as symbols of a certain culture, society, and economy.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>When Roosevelt traveled to the Badlands, originally to hunt Bison, he was following in the footsteps of countless other elite men (both foreigners and Americans) who saw the American West as a global West, one colonial enterprise among many others around the world, where they could test their bodies and establish their fortunes.⁸ In this way, Roosevelts' time in the Badlands is quite similar to the Earl of Dunraven's time in Estes Park, CO, or to Sir Horace Plunkett and Moreton Frewan's ranch operations in Wyoming.</p> <p>Had Roosevelt never hunted and ranched in the Badlands, he may not have ever written <i>Hunting Trips of a Ranchman</i>, and had that not happened, he may never have met George Bird Grinnell, co-founder of the Boone & Crockett Club (B&C Club) and a man the <i>New York Times</i> named the "Father of Conservation."⁹ In addition to the Yellowstone Protection Act of 1894, the B&C Club organized and published several globalist works on hunting and natural resource conservation that ignored national boundaries. In 1895 the B&C Club published <i>Hunting in Many Lands</i>, edited by Roosevelt and Grinnell, which described how hunting differed across continents, and the unique problems and peculiarities posed by the destruction of forests and other animal habitats across the world. In this edited volume, Roosevelt contributed a chapter on Antelope hunting in the Badlands.¹⁰ He and his B&C Club cohort also founded the New York Zoological Society "to secure herds – not merely individuals – of each of the large North American quadrupeds, and to place them as far as possible in surroundings identical with or closely resembling their natural habitats."¹¹ As part of this program, bison would be bred before being reintroduced to their native habitats in "natural preserves," such as the North Dakota Badlands. The experiment failed when the grasses native to the Bronx area could not support the bison, even as zookeepers resorted to feeding them prairie grasses varieties like Dakota's big bluestem (<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>) and blue grama (<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>) by hand.¹² While Roosevelt was deeply saddened when the bison did not transplant, he took heart in the fact that his breeding efforts elsewhere in Indian territory seemed to be working, and even as recently as May 13, 2015, bison can be found wandering</p>		
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⁸ Monica Rico, *Nature's Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁹ Douglas Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 185.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, "Hunting in Cattle Country," in Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell ed., *Hunting in Many Lands: the Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1895), 278-318. [Project Gutenberg Digital Edition].

¹¹ George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, *Trail and Camp-Fire: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1897), 313, 317.

¹² Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior*, 284.

<p>Iowa and Missouri that can trace their lineage to Roosevelt's participation in the Bronx Zoo.¹³</p> <p>The NPS plans for the park always included the return of bison as the long-term goal. After years of effort to construct the perimeter fence that would contain the herd in the South Unit, in 1956 the park brought in 29 bison from Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska. The herd thrived and gave the agency confidence to introduce bison to the newly fenced North Unit in 1962. By 1963, park staff were faced with the need to cull the herd and began a regular cycle of reduction at least every other year. In 1974, the NPS constructed corrals in the North Unit to facilitate these periodic roundups. In addition to growing in number, the bison herd also frequently broke through the perimeter barbed-wire fencing and left the park. Rangers rode out to herd them back or to destroy the animals they couldn't capture. A new woven-wire fence replaced the barbed-wire fence in 1977, but the problem continued. In 1980, a drought year, bison left the park on a daily basis in search of better sustenance. Bison culled from the park herd were trucked to Fort Berthoud Indian Reservation, but they sometimes left their new home and tried to return to their former habitat.</p>		
<p>Cattle</p> <p>By 1884, the official rough estimate by the Bureau of Animal Industry was 346,000 cattle in the Dakota Territory, or approximately 277 acres per animal. This may have been a gross underestimation, as only two years later the Bureau declared the open range to be completely full and overstocking was leading to depressed prices. Roosevelt helped the Little Missouri Stock-growers association collect 4,000 cattle in the spring of 1885.¹⁴ Those 4,000 cattle, each consuming 1,027 pounds of feed per month, would consumer over 49 million pounds of feed per year, far in excess of the roughly 19 million pounds of forage that the Badlands effectively provides.¹⁵ Well over 4,000 cattle traversed the Badlands over the span of four years, from 1883 to 1887. The winter of 1886-87 decimated many cattle operations, including Roosevelt's, and some lost as much as eighty percent of their herd. Those operations that survived ran cattle on a greatly diminished range and shifted to smaller operations.</p> <p>Cattle ranching in the homesteading/settlement era transformed into small-scale, fenced operations as new residents confronted the environmental, economic, and political constraints that changed</p>	3, 5, 6, 7	N/A

¹³ Emma Morgenstern, "What Happens when you Reintroduce an Extinct Species Back to its Home?," <http://modernnotion.com/bison-illinois-nachusa/> (2015 May 13) [Accessed 2015 June 25].

¹⁴ Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 296.

¹⁵ Amanda Hancock, "Doing the Math: Calculating a Sustainable Stocking Rate," North Dakota State University, North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, accessed July 17, 2015, <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/archive/streeter/2006report/aums/Doing%20the%20Math.htm>.

<p>open range ranching throughout the West. After the park era began in the 1940s, the surviving local stockmen negotiated with the NPS for continued access to the Little Missouri from the railroad that ran adjacent to the river.</p> <p>During WWII, the federal government allowed cattle grazing on park lands and thousands trespassed onto unfenced areas. The NPS fenced the perimeter of the park in the 1940s and 1950s and in 1953 the park superintendent ended the practice of permitted cattle grazing on park lands. That decision did not remove cattle from the park altogether, as the NPS then introduced its own managed herds of cattle and support infrastructure in the form of dish tanks and corrals in the backcountry, “Zone 2” regions.</p> <p>In 1966, the NPS introduced longhorn cattle to the North Unit for the first time. Roosevelt had preferred shorthorn cattle, so it was an interesting choice. Because a steer-only herd cannot reproduce, their population was easier to control than feral horses. Park staff continued to add to these herds to maintain visibility as a living history exhibit.</p>		
<p>Corrals and Dish Tanks</p> <p>By 1973, the NPS mission for Theodore Roosevelt National Park included the introduction of cattle herds along with wildlife species into “Zone 2” backcountry regions. Today, the National Park Service maintains 13 water developments in the South Unit and 4 in the North Unit of THRO, ostensibly to provide large ungulates with a reliable source of drinking water and disperse impacts of herbivory. However, most of the developments were developed for domestic livestock, which occurred before THRO became a National Park. Many are natural springs and consist of a concrete bowl or other simple, gravity fed structure to catch water runoff. Research indicates the developments do not provide a substantial benefit to park wildlife (most notably bison and elk), and most are expected to be removed as they degrade and are no longer operational.¹⁶</p>	7, 8	N/A
<p>Coal seams</p> <p>Western North Dakota contains 351 billion tons of lignite coal, the single largest deposit in the world. Indeed, boosters claimed that the coal seams in the Badlands contained “enough coal to supply the</p>	3, 5	N/A

¹⁶ Based on conversations with park staff in 2016.

<p>world.” Roosevelt was enamored with “burning mines,” the name for fires that burned when lightning struck exposed coal seams. Locals and the railroad used the coal for heat and fuel. Roosevelt’s stories about the fires could help anthropomorphize the park’s geology. They could also help launch discussion/education about fossil fuels and their effect upon the park’s resources.</p> <p>Homesteaders who brought with them at least rudimentary knowledge of surface mining of coal. These mines in western North Dakota were known as “wagon mines” because farmers and ranchers hauled their supply for home use with their own wagons. Identified mining sites in the area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NW corner, Elkhorn Ranch ➤ East side of Little Missouri River, north of Black Tail Creek ➤ Halliday Ranch near Paddock Creek ➤ T.E. McGregor’s homestead (NE ¼ NW 1/4 -12-148-100) ➤ 4500 feet west of Sheep Creek 		
<p>Cottonwoods and Willows</p> <p>Cottonwoods were an important wood source for indigenous people living in villages and as Europeans built trading forts in the area wood consumption grew. The region experienced wood shortages by the mid-1830s, which required traveling farther from villages and forts for adequate supply and spread the removal of trees. Cutting of wood in the region’s riparian areas increased dramatically with the introduction of steamboats along the Missouri. Deforestation and competition with whites for the dwindling wood supply was the tipping point that encouraged the Three Affiliated Tribes to agree to a bounded reservation within which they might have exclusive access to wood along the bottom lands. But as that remaining supply failed along with adequate game to support self-sufficiency, tribal members were forced to accept their fate of moving into individual allotments—the end of village life.</p> <p>In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, timber cutting in riparian areas increased again. Cottonwoods would have been the primary timber source for ranchers like Roosevelt. As riparian vegetation cottonwoods would have drawn ranchers and, later, homesteaders to water sources like the Missouri. They also acted as food for local wildlife and at times cattle (including during the winter of 1886-87).</p> <p>Norwegian homesteaders cut cottonwood, pine, and American elm in large quantities throughout the region as they began to construct more permanent wooden structures, but they also planted</p>	<p>2, 3, 5, 6, 7</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>cottonwoods, willows, and small shrubs as windbreaks and landscaping on their homestead sites.</p> <p>Shelter belts, streambeds, and wooded draws created refuge sites for cattle in dry years and the livestock made a significant impact on plant communities, compacted soils, and erosion rates in the riparian zone. Green ash trees in the draws served as both shelter and forage for cattle and had limited ability to develop into mature specimens.</p> <p>Surveys and observations by federal agents in the 1940s noted that the draws and drainages continued to show evidence of heavy use and grazing from the previous decades. During WWII, the Fish and Wildlife Service allowed locals to gather wood and hay from park lands.</p>		
<p>Large Predators (Coyotes, Grizzly Bears, Mountain Lions, Wolves)</p> <p>Ranchers destroyed coyotes and the Great Plains wolves because these predators that threatened cattle herds in the late nineteenth century. Roosevelt documented the primary methods of extermination of predators, which were the use of poisonous wolf bait and wolf bounties funded by the stockgrower associations. These “wolfers” also eliminated coyotes, lynx, and bobcats in order to protect the cattlemens’ investment in their herds. Grizzly bears once roamed the park region and were likely extirpated from North Dakota by the early 1900s.</p> <p>Wolves have not returned to the park but occasional transient wolves are observed on rare occasions near the North Unit. Coyotes are common and abundant predators in the park today and are found in all THRO park units. Mountain lions also reside in the North and South Units. Researchers are investigating the validity of the assumption that they are present in relatively small numbers.</p>	3, 5	N/A
<p>Deer, Pronghorn Antelope, Elk, and Bighorn Sheep</p> <p>Peoples as close as Hidatsas on the Missouri and as far as the Crees on Manitoba prairies came to the badlands to hunt deer and bighorn sheep before Europeans arrived. They traded deer and elk skins to white traders once exchange with the Europeans began. Deer and elk remained a major food source for white ranchers and farmers as they began to populate the Northern Plains in larger numbers in the late nineteenth century, and their numbers declined accordingly. Roosevelt remarked that they had nearly vanished by the time he arrived in the badlands, leaving only small game in the immediate vicinity of Elkhorn Ranch.</p>	1, 3, 6, 7, 8	N/A

<p>In 1895 the B&C Club published <i>Hunting in Many Lands</i>, edited by Roosevelt and Grinnell, which described how hunting differed across continents, and the unique problems and peculiarities posed by the destruction of forests and other animal habitats across the world. In this edited volume, Roosevelt contributed a chapter on antelope hunting in the Badlands.¹⁷</p> <p>In the 1940s, as plans for a national park in the badlands were underway, no elk and only a small number of deer and antelope had been seen in the region since the homesteading era. But assisting with the recovery of these typical fauna, a mix of wild and domesticated species including bison, longhorn cattle, and feral horses became important features that the NPS would use in coming decades to interpret the history of the badlands. In 1951, the NPS brought 75 antelope from Yellowstone National Park to the South Unit. The antelope required no management in terms of containment as they crossed the park boundaries freely.</p> <p>The NPS brought nine bighorn sheep to the park in 1960 and moved them into an enclosure in the South Unit. At its apex, the herd size was probably close to 30.¹⁸ The herd dwindled due to lungworm and for that reason became a management problem in the 1970s. By 1990, only six captive sheep remained in the South Unit.</p> <p>In 1985, park rangers reintroduced elk to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. By this time, park management objectives called for their presence as necessary major herbivores in the badlands ecosystem, and their historic presence in the Roosevelt era was only a secondary concern. Elk moved in and out of the park along with antelope, which repopulated the larger region with the species.</p>		
<p>Elkhorn Ranch and Greater Elkhorn Grasslands</p> <p>On September 15, 2007 Elkhorn Ranch was officially made part of the public domain after the Boone & Crockett Club, led by executive vice president Lowell Baier, raised upwards of \$500,000 to purchase the property and transfer it into federal ownership (in 1883 Roosevelt purchased the land for \$400). “Elkhorn Ranch is where Roosevelt connected with the land” wrote Baier, “This is where his visions for a national conservation ethic and the beginnings of wise use conservation came from, in the quiet</p>	<p>4, 7, 8</p>	<p>Site: 32BI0008</p> <p>National Register District: 9/8/2012 (12000252)</p> <p>Criteria: A, B, D</p> <p>Significance: Conservation, Historic (non-aboriginal)</p> <p>Period of Significance: 1875-1899</p>

¹⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, “Hunting in Cattle Country,” in Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell ed., *Hunting in Many Lands: the Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1895), 278-318. [Project Gutenberg Digital Edition].

¹⁸ Based on conversation with park staff in 2016.

solitude along the banks of the Little Missouri River north of Medora.”¹⁹

While most of Roosevelt’s conservation work occurred after he left the ranch in 1887, his time spent ranching there opened his eyes to natural resource issues like overgrazing, overhunting, forest denudation, and water contamination. His early opinions of Native Americans were formed second-hand through his interactions with other hunters, cow-punchers, cowboys, and ranchers who told horrific and often-exaggerated stories about attacks on ranchers and settlers in the region.

Following Roosevelt’s own bodily transformation in the Dakotas, from that of a sickly boy to a man, convinced the future president of the regenerative healing powers of the western environment. At the same time he discovered what he considered to be the idealized form of masculinity which directly informed his famous “Strenuous Life” speech but also his selection of troops for the equally famous Rough Rider Regiment.

Importantly, his time at Elkhorn and in the Badlands provided him the intellectual and practical experiences he needed to connect with other elite Anglo-American hunters and naturalists (such as George Bird Grinnell among others) in order to form the basis for the modern conservation movement.

Inclusion of Elkhorn Ranch within the boundaries of the newly created Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park provided the rationale for creating a park based on national historical significance. The act called for the reconstruction of the ranch, although by the Mission 66 era of the late 1950s and early 1960s the NPS had not yet invested funds in that effort. The 1973 Master Plan placed the “highest priority” on this overdue project, and 1978 plans included reconstruction of Roosevelt’s original nine ranch structures and greater visitor access to the site, which was only accessible during portions of the year when primitive roads allowed. But completion of these plans coincided with a new era of management directives and environmental laws and the initiative failed because park managers anticipated public outcry.

Preservation standards that guided accurate reconstruction projects for historic sites had also become more rigorous in the years since the park created the original plan for the site, so by 1987 the General Management Plan called for simple building delineations and interpretive signage at the ranch. Lack of convenience facilities minimized visitation to the site, but it remained an important place that required protection as development continued to threaten its

¹⁹ “President Roosevelt’s ‘Cradle of Conservation’ Dedicated by U.S. Forest Service,” *RedOrbit* (September 11, 2007) [accessed July 27, 2015].
http://www.redorbit.com/news/science/1062552/president_roosevelts_cradle_of_conservation_dedicated_by_us_forest_service/.

condition and preservation. Its proximity to a planned “high speed industrial road” in the mid-1980s caused Billings County to withdraw the plan after park officials objected. Another attempt in 1995 ended similarly. The site’s remoteness, isolation, clear air, and unobstructed views had become its primary values to the NPS and the park’s visitors.		
Granaries and Barns The Civilian Conservation Corps largely destroyed and removed material culture associated with agricultural activities. Five granaries and ten barns were constructed inside the future park in the early twentieth century, ²⁰ yet no physical remains are present. However, extension documentation of agricultural development in southwestern northern Dakota, and in Billings and McKenzie counties specifically, along with the information on destruction of the granaries and barns and the emergence of non-native vegetation, suggest that this development occurred within the park.	5	N/A
Grasses, Native and Introduced Mixed grass prairie ecosystem included needle-and-thread, blue grama, and big bluestem. It supported bison, and later cattle, along with many other associated species in the uplands of the region. Because free-range cattle did not roam far from streams, the effects of their grazing impacted the environment heavily compared to their predecessors and decimated their food base. Ranchers also engaged in fire suppression to protect the cattles’ food source, which further altered the fire-adapted ecosystem, reducing biodiversity and allowing for the introduction of weeds. Cattle ranching and homesteading eventually led to near-extinction of native mixed grass prairie ecosystem in the badlands. New introduced species such as sweet clover, slender wheatgrass, wild oats, and small-grained rye replaced the native species as food supply for grazing animals. Homesteaders began cultivating brome grass pastures by 1923 and, along with highly invasive leafy spurge, these new plants reduced the carrying capacity for livestock by up to 75 percent.	1, 3, 5	N/A

²⁰ Job Application, US Dept of Interior, NPS, CCC and ERA. A. Job Application: Nursery, Adjacent to Peaceful Valley Service and Control Area. Approved by Sgd. Walter F. Clarke, April 7, 1941. (located in Folder: SU 1930s, Construction, in the set of info John returned)

A. Job Application (loose paper set). Stamped Aug 19, 1940. Attached to Job Completion report dated Feb 13, 1941
This application is valuable for its description and specs of 13 sets of buildings in the south unit of the park that were razed in 1940. Gives family names, type of building, sizes, building materials. Report states locations are on accompanying maps – where are the maps?. Memo, Morris Winter, Project Manager, Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area, to Inspector Clark, Sept 3, 1940 refers to a granary in the north unit

<p>Building Types (European American)</p> <p><i>Dugouts and small sod homes</i> or a combination of the two styles, with interior walls plastered with a mixture of straw, grass and mud and then lime-washed, provided a quick alternative to wooden building styles for early homesteaders in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The remains of two dugouts are visible today in Section 4 of the North Unit. While Norwegians tended to move on to more permanent structures, German-Russians experienced higher poverty rates and thus remained in their sod-and-dugout homes for years. Open patches of disturbed soils where sod and earth was harvested for building construction may be evident as areas of dense non-native plants.</p> <p><i>Einheitshauser</i> were stone or earthen-block dwellings with gabled roofs constructed by Germans from Russia that included attached animal barns or sheds. They brought this Old-World architectural style with them to North America and modified it to incorporate locally available building materials.</p> <p><i>Log buildings</i> were constructed of cottonwood by ranchers (including Roosevelt and his partners at the Maltese Cross and Elkhorn ranches) and early settlers, as well as by previously nomadic indigenous people who were forced into sedentary communities on reservations in the nineteenth century. Log buildings in the latter decades of the nineteenth century were finished with manufactured commercial products such as nails, doors, and windows. The most well-known representation of this type, Roosevelt's Maltese Cross Cabin, became known as the "Cradle of Conservation" (see entry for Maltese Cross Cabin below). Later, the Civilian Conservation Corps' characteristic stone-and-log rustic architectural style invoked a romanticized and modernized echo of the early settlement era.</p> <p><i>Frame buildings</i> were built by homesteaders from pre-cut lumber attained from local lumberyards as communities begin to establish along the railroad line. Mail-order pattern books provided the designs for some of the buildings. Styles ranged from folk vernacular I-homes built from pre-cut lumber or locally harvested timber, classic Queen Anne homes, and tarpaper shacks. Norwegian vernacular wood buildings that replaced the temporary dugouts for settlers from that country utilized their skilled experience with wood construction, but required settlers to travel up to 75 miles to cut pine, American elm, and cottonwoods in adequate quantities. For this reason, many of the wooded draws and shelter belts within today's park boundaries were cleared of timber by settlers from all over the region during the early homesteading era. The federal government razed these early wood structures during the acquisition of park lands in the 1930s.</p>	4, 5, 6	

<p>Horses</p> <p>Indigenous people who lived and hunted on the Northern Plains used horses for hunting, trading, and warfare beginning in the mid-eighteenth century. In the 1880s, Roosevelt reported killing wild horses if they appeared dangerous, while ranchers relied heavily on domesticated horses for travel and working their cattle during the boom.</p> <p>During WWII, the federal government allowed cattle and horses to graze on park lands and thousands trespassed onto unfenced areas. The NPS fenced the perimeter of the park in the 1940s and 1950s. The NPS organized the first horse roundup in 1954 with the intent to eliminate the feral herds from the park. That effort removed 100 animals, most of them branded. Another planned roundup in 1965 was meant to capture and remove all remaining horses, but it proved controversial with the public and the number of horses continued to grow. By the early 1970s, the park's Master Plan recognized the reintroduced wildlife species, the longhorn cattle, and the feral horses as a matrix of managed natural resources. In lieu of an abundance of historic resources, these species were managed to interpret Roosevelt's association with the Badlands in the open-range cattle frontier of the 1880s. But the horse herds were showing signs of inbreeding and exceeded acceptable numbers.</p> <p>Recognizing that the feral horses were difficult to remove as well as controversial, the NPS instead developed a management plan for the herds and planned to reduce their number to 40. A cull effort in 1978 brought the number to 43. The park gained title to these horses from local rancher Tom Tescher.</p> <p>Park visitors by then perceived the horses as part of the natural scene and thus they required scientific management along with the wildlife species. Despite genetic evidence to the contrary, some North Dakotans argued that the horses were a unique indigenous breed descended from Sitting Bull's war ponies. In 1993 a state bill sought to make the "so-called Nakota horse" the honorary equine species of North Dakota. As the horses achieved this iconic status and even greater scrutiny, park management of the herd required ongoing ecological and political savvy and the animals came to represent how ideas about wildlife and wildness have changed over time.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 7, 8</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Maltese Cross Cabin (aka Chimney Butte Ranch Headquarters)</p> <p>In 1960-61, the Maltese Cross Cabin (1883) was moved to the headquarters district from its original location at the Chimney Butte Ranch, six miles south of Medora and has served as a visitor exhibit for the park since that date. The one-story cabin contains three rooms--living room, kitchen, and bedroom--within its 408-square-foot layout. The cabin was constructed of hand-hewn Ponderosa</p>		<p>National Register Multiple Property Listing form drafted: 2001</p> <p>Integrity: multiple instances of dismantling and reconstruction are</p>

pine logs originally cut to serve as ties and pilings for the Northern Pacific Railroad. The cedar shingle roof is a reconstruction of the original. A detailed architectural description is found in the 2001 National Register form.		problematic for integrity and thus eligibility for listing. Recommendation: Revisit with SHPO
Night Sky There are a number of Theodore Roosevelt quotations that refer to twilight/night time in the Badlands and that reflect the importance of unpolluted night skies for the visitor experience and wildlife habitat preservation in the park. <i>“As it grew dusk the shadowy outlines of the buttes lost nothing of their weirdness; the twilight only made their uncouth shapelessness more grim and forbidding. They looked like the crouching figures of great goblin beasts.” (Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail, 162-63)</i> <i>“After nightfall the face of the country seems to alter marvelously, and the clear moonlight only intensifies the change. The river gleams like running quicksilver, and the moonbeams play over the grassy stretches of the plateaus and glance off the wind-rippled blades as they would from water. The Bad Lands seem to be stranger and wilder than ever, the silvery rays turning the country into a kind of grim fairyland. The grotesque, fantastic outlines of the higher cliffs stand out with startling clearness, while the lower buttes have become formless, misshapen masses, and the deep gorges are in black shadow; in the darkness there will be no sound but the rhythmic echo of the hoof-beats of the horses, and the steady, metallic clank of the steel bridle chains.” (Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail, 64)</i>	3	N/A
Open Range Lack of fences drew Roosevelt and his contemporaries to the region and was an important part of their romantic ideas about the place as well as their economic reality. “Here there are no fences to speak of,” Roosevelt wrote, “and all of the land north of the Black Hills and the Big Horn Mountains between the Rockies and the Dakota wheat-fields might be spoken of as one gigantic, unbroken pasture, where cowboys and branding-irons take the place of fences.” ²¹ If whites equated a lack of fences with wildness and used it as a means to idealize the frontier, they ignored how use of the open range for the cattle market affected the ability of indigenous people to maintain their own way of life on the same landscape.	3, 7	N/A

²¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “Ranch-life in the Far West,” *The Century Magazine*, January, 1888, 1.

<p>In the 1940s and 1950s, the NPS erected a perimeter barbed wire fence to prevent trespassing cattle and horses from entering the park and competing with wildlife. In 1953, the park superintendent ended the practice of cattle grazing on park lands.</p> <p>Today, THRO maintains an approximation of open range habitat within the interior of the park as an important historic feature that characterizes the nineteenth century landscape of the Badlands.</p>		
<p>Park Infrastructure (CCC-era)</p> <p>The WPA and CCC provided the labor to realize the NPS vision for designed landscapes that facilitated auto travel through the park and provided vistas and roadside conveniences such as picnic areas, campgrounds, pit toilets, and signs and trails for travelers. Administrative needs such as office buildings and ranger residences also appeared. CCC era structures relied on rustic techniques and native materials intended to blend in with the environment, while the removal of structures and other traces from the area of ranching and farming created a landscape that supported a notion of unspoiled, wild country.</p> <p><i>South Unit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cottonwood Campground: Built and landscaped by CCC Company 2772. The pylon sign that remains at the entrance is from the CCC era, but the campground was updated in the Mission 66 era. The original campground included 25 campsites. ▪ CCC-era South Unit Scenic Drive from Painted Canyon to Peaceful Valley Ranch. This road left Highway 10 at the park's east end and passed through the rustic CCC-era entrance and ended at Peaceful Valley Ranch. A secondary road continued north to Wind Canyon. Stone culverts and ashlar sandstone retaining walls were designed to maintain a naturalistic appearance. Two or three wood and post guardrails per section at 22-inches high, use of large boulders and shrubbery to blend the road and wayside stops with the landscape. The culverts were hidden by ashlar sandstone headwalls. ▪ CCC-Era East Entrance Station and Pit Toilet (1938-1968). With rock-faced, ashlar sandstone walls, these structures represent the NPS style of rustic architecture. The stone walls, quarried twelve miles southwest of Medora, jet out from each side of the office building and lead into log fencing. A. Boicourt, a local homesteader and stone mason, crafted the 	<p>6, 7 , 8</p>	

<p>walls.²² The fencing and stone walls also contributed to the design that blended human construction with natural setting.²³ These structures are now isolated 1/2 –mile from I-94 and the historic road leading to that entrance station is fully obscured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CCC Entrance Sign at the original South Unit entrance was ashlar sandstone entrance pylon with wrought-iron lettering and cowboy silhouette with “TR” initials. It was in this location until 1966, when the NPS moved it to the Painted Canyon Overlook. ▪ Bridges: CCC workers constructed bridges at Paddock Creek, Jones Creek, and near the Peaceful Valley junction <p><i>North Unit CCC</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North Unit Scenic Drive: Road segment from Highway 85 to Little River/Oxbow Overlook. Constructed between 1935 and 1939, this mostly unpaved road covered 14 miles from the boundary through Cedar Canyon to a turnaround and parking area at Oxbow Bend. The NPS paved the road beyond Squaw Creek Campground during Mission 66 and added multiple turnouts with interpreted signage and expanded parking. The CCC-era guardrails were replaced and crews widened the road bed from 20 to 22 feet and added shoulders. The NPS replaced the 1938 Squaw Creek bridge in 1975. ▪ Camp Tender’s Camp. This early CCC-era ranger’s station was remodeled into a residence in 1953. It was originally a board-and-batten building located ¼-mile north of the North Unit entrance. ▪ CCC-era pylon Sign at the northern entrance (1938) ▪ Squaw Creek/ Juniper Picnic Area and Campground (1938). CCC workers constructed comfort stations, a well, foot-bridge, campsites, and two stone picnic shelters at this site. In the Mission 66 era, this campground was modernized with new comfort stations and water and sewer systems. In the mid-1970s, the NPS added more campsites, group camping, and additional comfort stations and removed CCC-era fire grates, log picnic tables, and its original amphitheater. Only the two stone CCC-era picnic shelters remained. 		
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²² National Register of Historic Places Inventory –Nomination Form, continuation sheet: Significance, Item Number 8, Page 2.

²³ National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Continuation Sheet, Item Number 7, Page 6. Contains architectural descriptions of these structures.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little Missouri Overlook Shelter. Also known as the Riverbend Overlook, it was built in the CCC era on the rim of a bank along the scenic road to provide views of the river below. Its walls and piers are constructed of rubble stone and are consistent with the era's rustic style. 		
<p>Park Infrastructure (Postwar/Mission 66)</p> <p>The postwar era was a period of consolidation and control over resources for the NPS, which culminated in the well-funded Mission 66 period. Responding to a rush of automobile tourism and lagging maintenance issues, NPS units began to slowly repair and add new infrastructure to support visitor services, improve roads, and provide adequate employee housing with a higher standard of living. Some CCC-era resources remained despite the extensive modernization effort in the 1960s, and structures in both the North and South Units were added to the National Register in 1976.</p> <p><i>South Unit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cottonwood Campground: This CCC-era site was updated significantly in the Mission 66 era. Between 1957 and 1962, it expanded from 25 campsites to 51 and workers constructed four comfort stations, new tables and fireplaces, an electrical system, water system with two artesian wells, and a campfire circle with seating and a rear screen projection building. ▪ The South Unit Scenic Drive from Painted Canyon to Peaceful Valley Ranch underwent roadbase improvements and blacktopping in 1951. In 1966, this entrance road closed although a 7-mile stretch of the original road, eight headwalls, and four retaining walls remain from the original construction. ▪ Painted Canyon Overlook (1966): This scenic interpretive location was adjacent to the new Interstate 94 highway running on the east side of the South Unit. To make use of this site, the NPS condemned the Noyes tourist attraction property and removed its distinctive commercial structures. In its place, the NPS constructed the Painted Canyon Visitor Center and moved the CCC-era pylon with the wrought-iron cowboy and "TR" initials to the site. In 1977, the NPS constructed a secondary visitor center and rest stop at the overlook. The new building featured solar panels and wind turbines. The solar panels required constant maintenance and did not warm the building adequately in winter, and the wind power system never operated at all and was quickly removed. The building was converted to fuel oil heat. Other problems at the isolated site included soil slumping soil and recurring vandalism. 		<p>Survey Mission 66 resources and identify appropriate Mission 66 districts in both units based on NPS guidelines for identifying and protecting resources from this era.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Mission 66-era Headquarters District included a visitor center and administrative offices (1959) and Roosevelt's Maltese Cross Cabin. The visitor center was the centerpiece of the park modernization period and the only architect-designed structure. Its L-shaped form was a simplified example of Park Service Modern and featured a steel frame, streamlined brick veneer, and a flat roof. The entry and lobby area lay at the axis of two wings. One wing contained a windowless exhibit room, library, and administrative offices. The other wing housed offices, bathrooms, and support services illuminated with ribbon windows. A flat-roofed colonnade around the exterior to create usable outdoor space for staff. The visitor center was renovated and expanded in 1980 and its new form included a major addition and substantially different design. ▪ The Maltese Cross Cabin (1883) was moved to the headquarters district and reconstructed in 1960-61. The one-story, three-room, 408-square-foot log and frame building with a wood shingle roof consists of a living room, bedroom, and kitchen and is now used as a visitor exhibit. ▪ A new Mission 66-era entrance road was constructed from Medora to Peaceful Valley and included an entrance kiosk (1961)²⁴ ▪ The Mission 66-era Residential District and Maintenance Area near Headquarters first included two ranch houses; a four-unit seasonal quarters building (1961); a vehicle storage garage of concrete block with a flat roof (1961); a warehouse of concrete block with a flat roof (1961); a pumphouse (1961); a shop building of concrete block with a flat roof (1961); four residences (1964) ; two ranch houses (1965); and two (?) 4-unit apartment buildings (1965). The ranch houses, cluster of apartment buildings, and the maintenance yard were based on standard Mission 66 architectural plans and exhibited a uniform, utilitarian vernacular modern style. Maintenance workers added insulation to the residences and shop in the 1970s to improve energy efficiency when oil prices rose sharply in that decade. ▪ Loop Road (1965): This 33-mile scenic drive created during Mission 66 originates near Peaceful Valley Ranch and was designed with carefully considered scenic views and wayside interpretive signage. 		
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²⁴ Maltese Cross Cabin Building 124 Individual Building Data Form, March 4, 1964, THRO Structure Inventory collection.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration Building (1979): Erected next to the maintenance yard in the Medora headquarters area, this structure included solar panels that worked well to heat the building. <p><i>North Unit CCC</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Unit Scenic Drive: The NPS paved the road beyond Squaw Creek Campground during Mission 66 and added multiple turnouts with interpreted signage and expanded parking. The CCC-era guardrails were replaced and crews widened the road bed from 20 to 22 feet and added shoulders. The NPS replaced the 1938 Squaw Creek bridge in 1975. Camp Tender's Camp. This early CCC-era ranger's station was remodeled into a residence in 1953. It was originally a board-and-batten building located ¼-mile north of the North Unit entrance. Squaw Creek/ Juniper Picnic Area and Campground: In the Mission 66 era, this 1938 campground was modernized with new comfort stations and water and sewer systems. In the mid-1970s, the NPS added more campsites, group camping, and additional comfort stations and removed CCC-era fire grates, log picnic tables, and its original amphitheater. Only the two stone CCC-era picnic shelters remained. In 1976, crews built a camptender's residence and office at the campground. At that time, Squaw Creek also featured 50 campsites, three new comfort stations, a fee collection station, and a group use area. Mission 66 Entrance Station (1952 or 1953). At the site of the CCC-era entrance station, the NPS created a more formal and elaborate entry point into the North Unit, which included constructing a new checking station (1952) and disassembling the CCC pylons and reusing the horse-on-rider motif for new decorative pylons (1959). Highway 85 realignment to Watford City in 1960 demanded immediate abandonment of this site for a new entrance road and a new entrance station (1960). Remodeled CCC-era residences (1953) Garage (1953) Utility building with carpenter shop (1957); pump and wellhouse (1957) 3-bedroom house (1957 or 1959) 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trailer house (1976) and wash house (1974) for seasonals added to residential area 		
<p>Peaceful Valley Ranch (aka Lamb Ranch)</p> <p>Site: 32BI67</p> <p>The late Victorian-era ranch was a donation to the effort to create a park in the region. Carl Olsen sold it to the state of North Dakota for use as a WPA and Emergency Conservation Work headquarters in 1936.²⁵ CCC laborers razed most of the buildings on the ranch with the exception of the three remaining buildings. They erected multiple outbuildings at the site. In the 1950s, the NPS laid water, sewer, electric and telephone systems out to the ranch and used it for an administrative headquarters. Although planning at the time included using the ranch as a historic site to depict Roosevelt-period ranching and a herd of longhorn mixed breed cattle, instead the NPS demolished or moved additional ranch-era and CCC-era structures between 1949 and 1955. By 1976, only three original structures remained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Log Barn: FWS modified this structure in the 1940s with a partial concrete floor and used it as a light plant. An NPS crew remodeled this building in the 1950s and park administrators moved in. Log and frame bunkhouse: FWS bolstered the foundation with petrified wood in the 1940s. An NPS crew remodeled this building in the 1950s and park administrators moved in. Frame ranch house: A frame addition was added before 1893. In 1903, George Burgess added an imported cedar log addition to the house for use as a kitchen area. An NPS crew remodeled this building in the 1950s and park administrators moved in. <p>Concessioners began to operate trail rides at Peaceful Valley Ranch in 1967. In 1975, the NPS added new horse pens and corrals to the ranch to support this activity.</p>	6, 7, 8	<p>Entered in National Register: 7/13/1994 (94000731)</p> <p>Criteria: A, C</p> <p>Significance: Agriculture, Entertainment/Recreation, Conservation, Architecture</p> <p>Period of Significance: 1900-1924; 1925-1949; 1885</p> <p><u>List of Classified Structures:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main Ranch House (HS-001) 2. Bunkhouse (HS-004) 3. Stone Culvert 7.0 (HS-007.0) 4. Barn & Equestrian Center (HS-015) 5. Stone Culvert 7.95 (HS-07.95) 6. Old East Entrance Station (HS-116) 7. Maltese Cross Cabin (HS-124) 8. CCC Camp Tender's Cabin (North Unit) (HS-209) 9. Picnic Shelter-Little Mo Nature Trail (HS-213)

²⁵ National Register of Historic Places, June 13, 1994

		<p>10. Picnic Shelter-Juniper Area (HS-214)</p> <p>11. Overlook Shelter (HS-215)</p> <p>12. Entrance Sign-North Unit-Large Pylon (HS-300)</p> <p>13. Entrance Station-North Unit-Small Pylon (HS-301)</p> <p>14. Entrance Sign-South Unit (HS-302)</p> <p>15.18 Type "A" Culverts Along Road 11b (HS-TYPEA)</p>
<p>Prairie Dogs</p> <p>Theodore Roosevelt observations from the 1880s:</p> <p><i>"Prairie-dogs are abundant...; they are in shape like little woodchucks, and are the most noisy and inquisitive animals imaginable. They are never found singly, but always in towns of several hundred inhabitants; and these towns are found in all kinds of places where the country is flat and treeless."</i></p> <p><i>"Around the prairie-dog towns it is always well to keep a look-out for the smaller carnivora, especially coyotes and badgers...and for the larger kinds of hawks. Rattlesnakes are quite plenty, living in the deserted holes, and the latter are also the homes of the little burrowing owls."</i></p> <p>Prairie dogs were one of the few native animals that increased with human disturbance of rangeland. By 1915, prairie dog towns up to 250 acres were scattered along the Little Missouri River in Billings County.²⁶ In 1953 the NPS mapped the park's 32 prairie dog towns and poisoned one colony that was near the park boundary. The extermination of coyotes from the area in the early twentieth century had led to a rodent boom, which presumably affected the prairie dog population as well.</p>	5, 7	N/A

²⁶ Decline of Prairie Dog Towns in Southwestern North Dakota, Norman G. Bishop and James L. Culbertson
Journal of Range Management, Vol. 29, No. 3 (May, 1976), pp. 218

The park contains from 1,000 to 1,800 acres of prairie dog towns today. The total acreage increases in dry years and decreases in wet years—a reflection of the self-regulating nature of the colonies. ²⁷		
Pyramid Park Hotel (not in the park) Located in Little Missouri along the Northern Pacific line, this building was where Roosevelt stayed when he first arrived in the Badlands for his bison hunt in September of 1883. It was located roughly half a mile northwest of Chateau de Mores on the west side of the Little Missouri.	3	N/A
Railroads Railroads were an essential technology in the development of the cattle industry in the Dakotas. They were necessary for the movement of cattle, men, and materials. The Northern Pacific Railroad was chartered in 1864 and by the 1880s made it possible for large herds fattened on the plains to reach eastern markets and railroad agents and promotional advertisements played a large role in stocking the region with both herds and people. By 1882 there were two Northern Pacific stations in Dakota Territory at Little Missouri and Bismarck. Expansion required timber in large quantities for ties, platforms, fences, stations, and railway carriages, as well as coal from the lignite beds of the Badlands for power. North Dakota's miles of railroad tracks nearly doubled between 1898 and 1915, from 2,662 to 5,226 miles, which resulted in the incorporation of 137 associated towns. ²⁸ Construction provided employment for skilled Norwegian carpenters interested in wage work, but the construction boom ended with the onset of the U.S. entry into World War I.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	N/A
Remoteness/Isolation Theodore Roosevelt observations from the 1880s: <i>"Nowhere, not even at sea, does a man feel more lonely than when riding over the far-reaching, seemingly never-ending plains; and after a man has lived a little while on or near them, their very vastness and loneliness and their melancholy monotony have a strong fascination for him."</i> <i>"Nothing could be more lonely and nothing more beautiful than the view at nightfall across the prairies to these huge hill masses, when</i>	3, 4, 8, 9	

²⁷ Based on conversation with park staff in 2016.

²⁸ Robinson, 239.

the lengthening shadows had at last merged into one and the faint after-glow of the red sunset filled the west."

Geographic isolation and the experience of remote, wild nature beyond the reach of modernity was an experiential quality and part of the wilderness character that Roosevelt recognized and valued during his brief time in the North Dakota badlands. Despite its links to eastern markets and urban centers and the boom periods experienced in nearby towns during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the rugged landscape limited development and the overall volume of human presence and the establishment of the park boundaries ensured that some degree of remoteness could be maintained permanently. This continuity allowed visitors an empathetic understanding of how Roosevelt and his contemporaries experienced the region. As scientific management of the ecosystem within the park gained momentum in the late twentieth century, its geographic isolation and ban on extractive activities gained value as conditions that supported habitat recovery and ecosystem health for non-human nature.

Oil and gas development beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, recurring again in the early 2000s, became the biggest threat to this resource because it created external activity such as road construction, slant drilling, gas flaring, water and air pollution, and rapid urban growth beyond park boundaries with a level of reach and impact that threatened the feeling of remoteness and the quality of habitat conditions for the park's flora and fauna, some of which regularly transgressed park boundaries.

Different land use policies and practices on the park borders also created management problems. Starting in the 1970s, wells on Forest Service land within ¼ mile of the park created heavy vehicle traffic on South Unit roads, which increased dust and exhaust in the air and killed wildlife. In the North Unit, the rotten egg smell from hydrogen sulfide produced in gas development was sometimes characterized as "intolerable" and the smell reached the headquarters area in the South Unit by 1986. Flaring gas created light pollution that affected night sky experiences for visitors and interfered with the viability of species reliant upon darkness. By 1987, more than 1500 active wells surrounded the three park units.

Other, lesser threats to park resources have included a power transmission line (1988), cell towers near Medora (2000) and new coal burning power plants (2002).

Related management areas and resources include:

Viewshed: The NPS defines viewshed as the area visible from a particular location. The historic viewsheds in the park are central to the original purpose and visitor experience of THRO. Lack of visual intrusions in the form of human developments and infrastructure preserves a remote quality that is increasingly rare

and valuable for human visitors to the park, but also illustrates the quality of uninterrupted habitat for its sensitive ecosystem. The Clean Air Act also requires consideration of vistas, which led to the first vista inventory at THRO in 1980. A 1990 study determined that park visitors' experiences depended heavily on scenic viewsheds, which numbered 28 in the park at that time. In 1991, the Visual Quality Management Guidelines identified the park's viewsheds, rated their value, and proposed mitigation strategies. Viewsheds in THRO today are threatened by urban development, road development, cell towers, and installation of well pads and associated features, which average 35,000-square meters in size. Drill rigs project up to 100 feet in the air and can be seen, along with gas flaring off the top, from great distances.

Soundscape: The NPS defines soundscape as "the total ambient sound level of the park, comprised of both natural ambient sound and human-made sounds." Like viewshed, the lack of human-induced sound is both rare and important for ecosystem health and for the human experience that national parks are struggling to provide in a rapidly urbanizing world. The 1986 General Management Plan identified noise pollution as a concern before the Bakken oil boom, and the 2014 NRCA pointed to the fracking activity surrounding the park as a major source of unnatural sounds that can carry for miles and that threatens the integrity of the three park units. Noise pollution sources include increasing traffic on roads and interstates, including heavy trucks moving water and equipment to the drill pads, construction equipment, and air compressors blasting air to pump fracturing fluids into the ground.

Night Sky and Lightscape: The definition of lightscape is "a place or environment characterized by the natural rhythm of sun and moon cycles, clean air, and of dark nights unperturbed by artificial light." Light pollution at night has a direct impact on the healthy function of multiple species and systems. Human visitors to the North Dakota badlands no longer experience darkness and views of the stars due to constant and growing gas flaring in the immediate surroundings. In addition to light spillage from the expanding cities serving the Bakken oil boom, gas flaring off the wells has been an ever-increasing source of light pollution at night since 2008 and the cluster of flares and lights resemble a major urban area from space.

Water Quality: Drilling and the practice of fracking threatens water quality throughout the region. Well pad construction associated with the oil boom strips vegetation from the soil and leads to erosion, and horizontal drilling and injection of fracking chemicals into the ground also effect groundwater and aquifer water quality to a degree still being measured in a weakly regulated system. Spill incidents in the Bakken development area north and east of the park's three units would bring pollution into the park through the natural flow of the Williston Basin. Other threats to water quality in

<p>THRO include livestock ranching and upstream golf course development.</p> <p><i>Air Quality:</i> Vehicle and industrial emissions create exhaust, dust pollution, and the emission of volatile organic compounds threaten human and wildlife health and affect vegetative species. The air quality of the park was rated as excellent until the 1980s. Monitoring began in 1974, and by 1982 declining air quality had become the chief resource management concern at THRO. Nitrate, sulfate, and ammonium levels rose noticeably between 2005 and 2014 in the Northern Great Plains, which is attributable to the oil and gas development in the region. Visibility is also affected by oil and gas because of the production of smog.</p> <p><i>Biodiversity and Habitat Quality:</i> As habitat declines due to these impacts, biodiversity is threatened. Habitat loss and fragmentation outside of the park boundaries threatens species that regularly cross park borders and rely on habitat in the wider region. Park management documents also refer to “the interplay of natural forces” as a resource requiring protection from external threats. Climate change is another threat to habitat conservation and methane leakage from the production of natural gas is also a threat because it is a greenhouse gas.</p>		
<p>River/Tributaries</p> <p>Roosevelt staged his buffalo hunt from Cannonball Creek, a tributary of the Little Missouri located about 40 miles south of Medora. The Little Missouri was essential to the growth of the cattle industry, as well. Cattle did not wander more than six or eight miles from water sources, and the Little Missouri would have been the primary water source for Roosevelt’s herds. Because cattle stuck so close to water sources, they reshaped riparian ecosystems by eating much of the vegetation around the river. This would have exacerbated floods. It was also a flaw (at least in ranchers’ eyes) in the ecological relationship between cattle and the landscape, because cattle’s reliance on proximity to the river accelerated overgrazing. Roosevelt also mentions that the Elkhorn cabin was built with logs that had been originally cut for use as railroad ties and had been floated down the Little Missouri. The river acted as a center of organic energy for cattle and ranchers, as well as a thoroughfare for the movement of men and materials.</p> <p>When the Antiquities Act was passed in 1906, the first monument created by President Roosevelt was Devil’s Tower in northeast Wyoming, a scant 15 miles from the Little Missouri River. While the record remains unclear if Roosevelt ever visited the tower in person, it is likely that he heard stories of the tower’s impressive size while he ranched in the Dakotas. The same waters that hurried past Devil’s Tower ultimately flowed right up to Elkhorn Ranch</p>	3, 4, 5	N/A

<p>and was used by Roosevelt to navigate while hunting and to water his cattle.</p> <p>During his presidency Roosevelt used the Antiquities Act to protect over one million acres of western lands for the continued use of Americans. Like Frederick Jackson Turner, Roosevelt believed that interacting with the landscape in person, physical ways was an important step in creating the ideal masculine American man.</p>		
<p>Roads (Homestead Era)</p> <p>Roads created during the homestead era created connections to other communities and to the market and they also indicated where settlers traveled to find game and other necessities for survival in the Badlands.</p> <p>Roads and routes from the Homestead Era:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Halliday Road and its crossing at Paddock Creek Bridge ➤ Schram Hill Road, running north-south from old Highway 10 ➤ Old Highway 10 running north of Buck Hill near Jones Creek ➤ Homestead Road to Peaceful Valley ➤ Unnamed road to Don Short's homestead ➤ Paddock Creek Trapping Trail ➤ Unnamed road north from North Unit to Watford City, with Chaloner's Ferry Crossing – just under the Long X Bridge ➤ The Little Missouri River provided a transportation route to and from Medora for some homesteaders 	5	
<p>Roosevelt's brands</p> <p>Both of Roosevelt's ranches utilized their own brand for identifying cattle. The Maltese Cross ranch was named for its brand, while the Elkhorn ranch beeves were branded with a triangle on one side and the silhouette of elk antlers on the other.²⁹</p>	3	N/A

²⁹ http://npshistory.com/handbooks/cooperating_associations/thro/images/thro28.jpg

<p>Scenic Drive, North Unit</p> <p>Road segment from Highway 85 to Little River/Oxbow Overlook. Constructed between 1935 and 1939, this mostly unpaved road covered 14 miles from the boundary through Cedar Canyon to a turnaround and parking area at Oxbow Bend. It was the only auto route in the area and included pullouts and overloads with the badlands and Little Missouri on one side and open prairie on the other. It was designed to place the visitor on the rim of the canyon to see across the valley and relied on naturalistic elements and grading techniques and plantings to hide construction scars. Other than the designed access to viewsheds and points of interest, only the turnouts at mile markers 6.2 and 6.3 contain historical integrity from the CCC era. The NPS paved the road beyond Squaw Creek Campground during Mission 66 and added multiple turnouts with interpreted signage and expanded parking. The CCC-era guardrails were replaced and crews widened the road bed from 20 to 22 feet and added shoulders. The NPS replaced the 1938 Squaw Creek bridge in 1975.³⁰</p>		<p>National Register Multiple Property Listing form drafted: 2001</p> <p>Criteria: A and C</p> <p>Significance: Architecture, Recreation, Conservation, Politics/Government</p> <p>Period of Significance: 1934-1941</p> <p>Recommendation: Revisit with SHPO and complete the listing process</p>
<p>Scenic Drive, South Unit</p> <p>Completed in 1938 by the Civilian Conservation Corps, this seven-mile, twenty-foot wide road ran from the work camp to Highway 10 between Painted Canyon and Peaceful Valley Ranch. The road offered scenic views of the Badlands along high points and followed a curvilinear pattern that made use of the natural geological contours and gave the illusion that it had always been there. The lack of roadway shoulders, the shallow two-foot drainage ditch, and the placement of structures, comfort stations, developed overlooks and picnic shelters along South Unit Scenic Drive highlight the merging of the natural and the build environment. As the South Unit's primary road from the 1930s to the present, park administrators have had to reconfigure the roadway in recent years to accommodate greater vehicle traffic.</p>	6	<p>National Register Multiple Property Listing form drafted: 2001</p> <p>Criteria: A and C</p> <p>Significance: Architecture, Recreation, Conservation, Politics/Government</p> <p>Period of Significance: 1934-1941</p> <p>Recommendation: Revisit with SHPO and complete the listing process</p>
<p>Trails, Backcountry, and Wilderness Areas (NPS Era)</p> <p>In 1972, the NPS began to construct a thirty-mile backcountry trail system inside the park boundary. Along with the new access trails into the park's interior, the NPS created a backcountry management plan and hired its first backcountry ranger in 1973. Today Theodore Roosevelt National Park has more than 100 miles of back trails.</p> <p>In 1978, "Memorial" was dropped from the name of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the site joined the category of parks managed as natural parks. The same omnibus bill designated 29,920 acres of the park, or 42 percent, as wilderness. The 1987</p>	8	N/A

³⁰ Theodore Roosevelt National Park Multiple Property Listing draft nomination form, 2001.

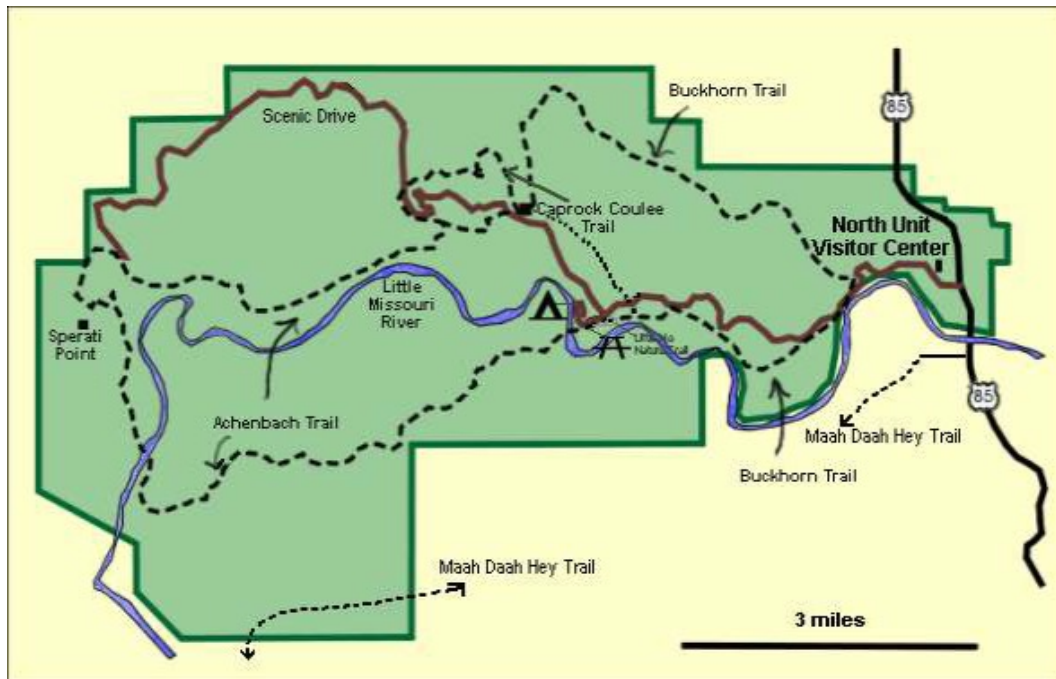
management plan called for protection and preservation of natural and cultural environments “to permit natural processes to continue with a minimum of human disturbance.” But the plan also continued to emphasize visitor enjoyment, recreation, and education. The 1994 Resource Management Plan explicitly adopted the agency’s ecosystem management approach, which emphasized holistic management and biodiversity. This transition from scenic backdrop to ecologically sensitive protected area created new challenges for THRO staff who also continued to manage category-defying resources such as the feral horse herds.		
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Appendix B

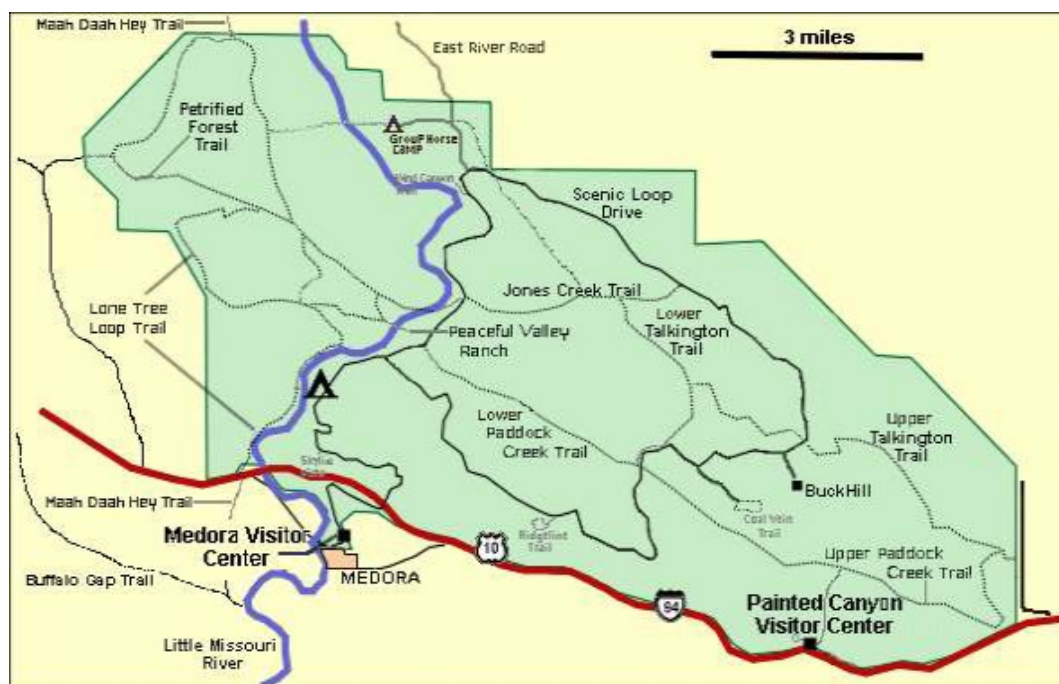
Maps of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Vicinity



North Dakota National Parks. From <https://www.nps.gov/thro/planyourvisit/maps.htm> (accessed 2016)



Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Unit.



Theodore Roosevelt National Park, South Unit.

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